EMPIRE-, STATE- AND NATION-BUILDING AND DECONSTRUCTING IN SPAIN

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Introduction

Spain is probably the clearest case of failure in the attempt to build a large nation-state in Europe. Against old expectations, the relatively recent establishment of democracy in Spain has not helped to build a large nation-state. Rather, it has favored the integration of Spain into the European democratic empire along with the development of small, increasingly self-governing nations. The so-called Spanish 'state of autonomies' is not an equilibrium, in the sense of a stable institutional solution for the relations between different territorial communities, but a frame for competition among territories and for the development of increasing demands for self-government. Homogenization of language and culture in Spain has decreased during the last decades. The Spanish state will not, thus, be what it could have been, a uniform nation-state under the Westphalian and French models. It actually tends to move increasingly away from that model. In the 21st century, building a Spanish nation-state, in the sense of a political organization based on effective sovereignty, power monopoly and the homogenization of the population, is an unviable endeavor.

In homage to Juan J. Linz, this paper builds on several of his findings regarding the processes of state-building and nation-building in Spain and tries to go over. The Linz' main points that are identified and highlighted here are the following:
1) Spain is a case of frustrated state-building and failed nation-building.
2) Modern Spain can be conceived as a multinational state, the first of its kind in Europe; building a nation-state in Spain is nowadays both unfeasible and undesirable.
3) Democracy, however, can exist and survive, in spite of the absence of a nation-state, on the basis of federal and consociational politics permitting the accommodation of multiple national groups. The Spanish 'state of autonomies' can be an appropriate institutional frame to create legitimacy for the Spanish state and prevent secession and conflict.

My own points, which are either additional or partly contradictory with some of Linz', are the following:
4) It was the failure in colonial empire-building that weakened state-building and led to failure in nation-building in Spain. Consistently, new alternative political movements, especially in Catalonia and to some extent in the Basque country, not only pretended to build alternative nations, but also alternative states and even alternative empires.
5) The establishment of democracy in Spain in the late 20th century has weakened even further the project of building a nation-state. Democracy has favored the integration of Spain into a new type of democratic and market 'empire', the European Union, which has thinned the Spanish state and lowered the cohesion of the Spanish nation. It has also induced the development of increasingly self-governing small nations, led by Catalonia and the Basque country.

6) The Spanish 'state of autonomies' is not in equilibrium, in the sense of a stable institutional formula, but it has become a frame for competition among territorial governments developing increasing demands for self-government.

1. Spain is a case of frustrated state-building and failed nation-building

Juan J. Linz' historical and analytical reflection on the politics and society of modern Spain has developed, in part, along some lines drawn by Stein Rokkan in his seminal and encompassing comparative work. In the early 1970s, Rokkan noted that the main traditions in the study of modern processes of state-building and nation-building suffered important biases. As they focused on large nations, processes covering the "whole nation", and the role of economic growth in creating social and national cohesion, they tended to forget small nations, center-periphery relations, and the role of cultural factors. Rokkan noted that, in contrast to conventional assumptions about the aim of building 'nation-states', in medieval and modern Europe "there was nowhere a complete fit between the 'state' and the 'nation'".

In particular, Rokkan remarked that "in Spain the Castilians were never able to build up a unified national culture: the Basque country and Catalonia remained strongholds of regional resistance". He also mentioned the central role of new transport technologies in changing the scale of human relations and the size of viable political communities. While new transport and communications technologies increase economic dependence between distant territories, at the same time they gradually build up pressures for greater autonomy. "The issue of dependency-autonomy is central in any study of nation building," including new opportunities for "exit options". (Rokkan 1971; see also Eisendstad and Rokkan 1973, Rokkan and Urwin 1983).

Linz' contributions certainly cast light on small nations, center-periphery relations, and the role of cultural factors. As he has focused on the convoluted history of modern Spain, he has been particularly concerned with the challenges of democracy in a context of "limited success in state-building and failure in nation building". Specifically:

"The Spanish state never achieved what French kings and ultimately the Revolution did: to create the fully unified state and a nation-state with its linguistic-cultural and emotional integration… The ultimate outcome of the Spanish state-building process was not like the French, Portuguese, or even Italian or German, nor was it like the British… It did not fully… succeed in building a nation-state… Castilian-speaking Spain was not strong enough to assimilate the periphery to the degree France was capable of doing with Brittany and its small Catalan minorities. Spain, born in the era of state-building, could not undergo the deep emotional process of democratic nation-building that the Italians underwent and Germany experienced since political unification". (Linz 1973: 99, 102).

Just to quote a similar statement written more than thirty years later: "In the Spanish case, like that of quite a few other countries, would-be nation-builders who sought to create a unique sense of identity based on language, history and culture following the French model, ultimately failed". (Linz, 2004: 15).

The explanation of this failure seems to be found in a particular historical dynamics: according to Linz, it was early state-building efforts in Castile which delayed state-building of Spain. Then, the weakness of the Spanish state made nation-building in the 19th century very difficult and finally a failure.

Rokkan suggested that state-building preceded and drove nation-building in the traditional 'model' case of France, while, with an opposite direction of causality, it was a process of nation-building, both economic and cultural, that supported late processes of state-

building in another model fitting cases such as Italy and Germany. But Linz insightfully remarks that, in the European context, state-building historically preceded nation-building, even in Italy and Germany, where it was the existence of core states, Piedmont and Prussia, that made nation building possible (Linz 1993: 255).

This permits to explain the failure of Spanish nation-building in the 19th century with a single reference model, since it can be attributed to the weakness of a sufficiently robust core state. However, by doing this, weak results of early efforts of state-building in Castile become a new explanatory variable which should be explained in turn. As I will suggest below, it may be that it is the weak results of the Castile-driven process of empire-building that can explain further weaknesses in state-building and nation-building in Spain.

2. Spain is a multinational state

For Juan J. Linz, Spain has become, in recent times, "the largest economically developed multilingual country", "the largest and the oldest multilingual country in Europe", and a "multi-national state", not a genuine nation-state. (Linz 1975: 367). Writing still during Franco's dictatorship in the early 1970s, Linz reflected that, in order to build a united Spanish state "the early 1950s" might have been a good moment (1973: 105). As remarked by some historians, the post-World War II period was indeed one of return of large nation-states -- France, Britain, Germany, Italy-- in reaction against the process of decolonization and internal fragmentation. Obviously, this return was feasible on the basis of previous successes in nation-state building during the 19th and early 20th century.

But, according to Linz: "from today's (1993) perspective those endeavors of modern states appear as far from formidable and represent a cost that many of us would not like to pay." Specifically, "an educational and cultural policy like that of the French Third Republic is difficult to conceive", since it included oppressive and discriminatory policies that would probably turn to authoritarianism (Linz 1993: 364).

Linz already recognized in the early 1970s, --that is, after renovated but unsuccessful efforts of dictatorial assimilation of Spaniards to the Castilian-pattern-- that, for a democratic future, "Castilian-speaking Spaniards will have to give up the idea of a Spanish nation created largely by them and accept a more decentralized, largely multilingual state" (Linz 1973: 105). "The multilingual character of Spain is an irreversible fact. Attempts to assimilate all Spaniards to Castilian might have succeeded in the 18th and 19th century, but are condemned to failure" in the late 20th century, according to Linz (1975: 377).

In the early 1970s, Linz included Spain among those countries with "marked subcultural pluralism" that, according to Robert Dahl, face a "tragic choice". They may have to choose either "hegemony", implying a single group's coercive domination, or "separation into different countries". As presented by Dahl, "the price of polyarchy [pluralist democracy] may be a breakup of the country. And the price of territorial unity may be a hegemonic regime" (Dahl 1971: 120-121); see Linz 1973: 103-104).

The more optimistic hypothesis that the unity of Spain could be preserved and the separation of the Basque country or Catalonia could be prevented by democratic means was advanced by Juan J. Linz on the basis of three expectations: Castilian resistance, political consequences of internal migrations, and persistency of Spain's external isolation. First, there has been, as it is obvious, a traditional Castilian resistance to accept multiple national communities within Spain. In particular, "Castilian-speaking Spaniards are not fully aware and refuse to become aware of the multilingual character of the country", an attitude that, apparently, one should expect to endure. (Linz 1975: 373).

Second, one could expect that, in Catalonia and the Basque country, "immigrant workers" born in other parts of Spain might play a significant political role against local nationalisms. This was emphasized in numerous occasions. Catalonia and the Basque country were seen as the scene of a "three-cornered conflict" between local nationalism, central government and Castilian-speaking immigrants (Linz 1973, 1975); prospects of internal linguistic conflict in the bilingual communities were highlighted (Linz 1975); emphasis was put on the political consequences of internal migrations (Linz 1981b); regarding the Basque country, the success of its autonomy within a multi-national Spain was conditioned to the "conflict between the two communities", that is, those formed by Basque-speaking natives and Spanish-speaking immigrants (Linz 1986).

Third, in the mid 1970s Linz assumed a "limited viability in the modern world of the emerging [small] units" (Linz 1975: 377). Specifically, he expected that separation would be discarded as a political option in Catalonia and the Basque country because "the economic cost of losing a protected Spanish market would probably be too high" (Linz 1973: 106). Years later, he made a similar point regarding new emerging nations in Eastern Europe: "the idea of joining the European Common Market as an alternative to state-wide large markets creates a new and very often false (sic) illusion for the new nationalist states" (Linz 1993: 365). However, both Spain in the 1980s and the new democracies in Eastern Europe in the 2000s entered the European Union and accessed to continent-wide very large markets.

Under the adverse conditions forecasted by Linz, "any attempt of secession would lead to civil war and ultimately authoritarian rule for all Spaniards". Secession, thus, should not become a viable option (Linz 1975: 424). Further developments during the last thirty years have, nevertheless, somehow dismissed some of these expectations, as will be discussed below.

3. Democracy can exist in absence of a nation-state.

Elaborating from the Spanish and a few other cases, such as Belgium, Canada and India, Juan J. Linz coined a new concept, 'state-nation', both to account for the successes of democratization away from the traditional, French-inspired model of 'nation-state' and to appeal for its diffusion. He introduced the concept of 'state-nation' as both an "observable empirical reality" and a "normative standard" (Linz, Stepan and Yadav 2004: 12).

The ground for this new conceptual elaboration is the observation that, in the current world, "we can probably count the true nation-states on the fingers of two hands" and that "it is increasingly difficult to make every existing state a nation-state". As an alternative, the concept of 'state-nation' refers to those states "generating the kind of identification that, although not being 'national', makes democracy possible within those states". This is a remarkable move away from the traditional thesis that democracy requires a state and a further nation-building as the basis for popular sovereignty.

The model of nation-state requires indeed to privilege one socio-cultural identity, encouraging assimilation by various forms of pressure and coercion. But "given the robustness of different politically salient cultural groups --Linz observes--, a classic French-style 'nation-state' may not be an option for a peaceful democracy without a costly, and most likely non-democratic, period of state-imposed assimilation efforts, and possibly even ethnic cleansing" (Linz et al 2004: 11).

In contrast, Linz defines 'state-nation' with these elements: a multicultural, even multinational state with institutions of "asymmetric federalism" and "consociational practices" inducing actors' mutual accommodation. These institutions and practices can make the state legitimate for the great majority of the population and, thus, collective decisions by

democratic means viable and enforceable. The Linzian concept of 'state nation' may evoke the Habermasian concept of 'constitutional patriotism', as both are concerned with the conditions for a viable democracy in absence of favorable cultural factors (with different but comparable historical backgrounds in mind, respectively Spain and Germany). For Linz, a new type of 'state nation' might be "compatible with [several] nations under its rule. Under this kind of institutional framework, a democratic, multinational, multicultural, multilingual state is possible". (Linz 1993: 367, 1999, Linz et al. 2004).

During the 1980s, Juan J. Linz closely studied the establishment and first years of practices of the so-called state of autonomies in Spain. He conceived its political structure as a kind of third way after both "independence" of Catalonia and the Basque country and "return to a centralized, unitary state" were considered unfeasible. These two options were discarded, as discussed above, mainly due to high degrees of cultural heterogeneity and potential conflict, respectively within each of the mentioned small nations and within the whole Spain. Accordingly, consociational democratic elements such as proportional representation and "segmented pluralism" were required, according to Linz, both at the level of the Spanish state and at the autonomous communities, especially in the Basque country (Linz 1986). These elements had been remarked by Rokkan as crucial components of alternative paths to nation-building, presented by Dahl as forms to obtain democracy in countries with marked "subcultural pluralism", and elaborated by Arend Lijphart, among other authors (See also Colomer 2001).

The Spanish state of autonomies was welcomed by Linz with moderate optimism regarding the possibility that secession and conflict could be prevented. A system of "corrected" proportional representation in the Spanish parliament could be moderately inclusive of political pluralism, especially of regional nationalist parties, while some degree of decentralization and autonomous communities' self-government could facilitate peripheral acquiescence to Castilian global dominance.

However, Linz rightly noted that the principle of 'democracy' attracted much wider consensus among Spaniards than the new model of 'territorial organization'. He remarked that, in contrast to changes in favor of decentralization or regionalization in other countries, in Spain the issue of territorial organization was especially challenging due to the existence of multilingualism, peripheral nationalism and regional political parties. Linz stated that the issue was how to transform a "centralized, officially monolingual state, conceived (sic) as a nation-state, to a politically decentralized, multilingual and partly multinational state". In a number of publications during the first years of the 'autonomous communities', he observed, on the basis of survey polls and voting behavior, that the new model obtained "increasing acceptation" and broad "consensus". (Linz 1981a, 1981b, 1985, 1986). He also compared positively the Spanish model and its success with the disgreggation of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and other multinational compounds (Linz and Stepan 1992).

Further developments, however, have shown that the initial configuration of the Spanish state of autonomies was not a stable equilibrium. Increasing demands for further decentralization of the state and for old and newly emerging small nations' self-government have steadily developed, as will be discussed below.

4. The role of empire in state- and nation-building failures

Let's discuss now some additional reflections to Linz' basic framework and update some of his expectations in the light of more recent developments. The first point is the role of empire-building and failure in the weakness of state-building in Castile and Spain. The building of a broad Spanish empire, which expanded through Europe, the Americas, Asia and

Africa from the 16th century on, helped to create collaborative links among the several traditional kingdoms existing on the Iberian peninsula: Castile-Leon, Aragon-Catalonia, Navarre-Basconia and Portugal. But the weakness of the Spanish empire put further attempts to build a unitary Spanish state and a Spanish nation in jeopardy.

At the beginning of the modern era, the population of the Crown of Castile was three times higher than that of Aragon, a proportion fostering Castilian temptations to impose its domination. The small nation of Portugal, open to the Atlantic, was able to escape from that domination by relying upon its own transcontinental empire, but Aragon-Catalonia, locked on the Mediterranean sea, could project only towards the Iberian peninsula.

For a couple of centuries, however, the relations between the different kingdoms in the peninsula basically amounted to a confederation. The expansion of the Castilian language from the 16th century on, for instance, was promoted as a replacement of Latin as a new lingua franca for written communication, but not necessarily at the expense of Catalan or any other of the languages spoken in the diverse traditional communities.

The attempt to building a Spanish state emerged more clearly during the 18th century. After the Westphalia treaty blessed the large states' sovereignty in Europe, the Bourbons' new monarchy tried to copy the centralized model of the French state. The 'New Plan' model implied a uniform control of all peninsular territories from Madrid, which was organized analogously to the administration of the overseas colonies, that is, around a Captain-general and a Royal Audience in each territory. During the 18th century, there was an intensification of forced military recruits and the imposition of the Castilian language (to the point of suppressing almost all Catalan universities, for example).

The Catalans and the Basques, though they were deprived of their own self-government, could access broader markets more easily thanks to the suppression of customs between the old kingdoms in the peninsula and the establishment of a unified external commerce tariff. The exchanges with the colonies also increased the links among the population. The opening of broad markets resumed during the 19th century, thanks to the securities provided by new civil, criminal and commercial codes, the defense of property, the adoption of the decimal metric system and the creation of the peseta, all occurring in parallel to the closing of the Spanish trade market through the prohibition of agricultural imports and other protections for Spanish producers.

All these developments tended toward build a Spanish nation, prosperous and modern, on the basis of an efficient Spanish state and an imperial ambition. But they did not imply culturally uniform patterns. The Catalans, in particular, continued to see the Castilian language as an imperial lingua franca permitting communication with the Spaniards and the colonies, rather than as a single, national and exclusive language. Castilian was actually not imposed as the single language in school until 1888 and was not declared the 'official language' until 1931, a very late date suggesting a rather defensive reaction to its failure as a national language.

The crucial crisis was the fall of the remnants of the Spanish empire in 1898 as a consequence of military defeat by the United States in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. The importance of this moment did not derive from the size of the colonies lost, since far more land had been lost during the first half of the 19th century in North and South America, but particularly from the feeling that, with this defeat, Spain would be isolated from the rest of the world. By the late 19th century broad new international economic relations were developing, thanks to new advances in communications and transports. While Great Britain consolidated itself as the first world power, the Spanish defeat in the Caribbean and the Pacific was caused by a new emerging power, the United States of America, which was then culminating its own territorial expansion and imperial building.

From this moment forward, many Spaniards developed low levels of national self-esteem. In Catalonia and the Basque country, the disappearance of the Spanish empire weakened popular support to the project of building a Spanish state and a Spanish nation, which ceased to look sufficiently appealing. For the entrepreneurial Catalans who had tried to lead the modernization of Spain, this was also a defeat, for which they sought consolation through a movement of internal affirmation. In Catalonia in particular, as alternatives to the failed projects of a Spanish nation and a Spanish state, there was not only the search for a new Catalan nation and a new Catalan state designed to more or less federalize a larger area, but also the dream of a new Catalan empire as a replacement for the extinguished Spanish empire.

The political movement known as 'Catalanism' was conceived of from the beginning as an instrument for the creation of a 'Great Spain', which may have included Portugal; there was great admiration for the United States of America; also the model of the dual and asymmetric empire of Austria-Hungary was frequently used; in general, there was an explicit wish to build a 'Greater Catalonia' of an imperial type. Francesc Cambó, leader of the Catalan regionalists, was accused by Spanish unionists of trying to be "at the same time Bolívar of Catalonia and Bismark of Spain", that is, the leader of the independence (from Spain) and the driver of a great empire (like the German one). But the two aims were not and are not contradictory. As noted by Juan J. Linz, it was expected that the re-incorporation of Portugal would have created the balance in population, resources, and cultural weight of the components of a multinational state (Linz 1973: 64-65).

None of these projects was successfully completed. In the 20th century, Spain was left out of the two World Wars and, after the Second one, as a dictatorship, it was initially excluded from the United Nations Organization, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Community. Imperial defeat and external isolation weakened the state, which was unable to integrate 'nationally' the inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula. In reaction, Catalan political movements gave enthusiastic support to the projects of building a united Europe. As was stated by a Spanish philosopher, in words that many Catalans would adopt, "Spain was the problem and Europe, the solution".

5. Democracy weakens the Spanish state

After a very long period of high political and institutional instability and several dictatorships, during the last quarter of the 20th century a new democratic regime was established in Spain, initially with broad social and political support. The building of democracy, however, led to integration in the European empire, which has weakened enormously the foundations of the Spanish state. With democracy, the nations of Catalonia, the Basque country, as well as other territories in the peninsula, have also developed increasing demands for self-government. These demands have been fostered by new access to large-scale public goods provided by the European Union, which make the Spain-wide state less necessary, competition between territorial autonomous governments for redistributing resources accumulated by the Spanish state, and the democratic advantages that small nations gain by having their own institutions.

Let's review a few basic elements of the weakened Spanish state. First, the Spanish army, partly integrated into NATO structures since 1981, is nowadays a small and ineffective body. Military expenditure, which had been above 2% of gross domestic product in 1990, at the peak of the Cold War, has been reduced to less than 1%, a proportion corresponding to military adventures before the 16th century. The compulsory draft, which had been a traumatic experience for millions of young Spaniards since the late 19th century, was shortened in duration at the end of the 1980s, but an avalanche of conscientious objectors and

desertions moved the government to accelerate plans for its elimination. Initially, it was officially projected that the number of military personnel, which was 375,000 when Spain joined NATO, would be reduced to 120,000 professionals, but in fact, for lack of volunteers, the number of troops has been reduced to less than 70,000 , of which only 7,000 are permanent. About 10% of the soldiers and marines have been recruited in foreign countries, especially in Latin America. The mix of professional mercenaries, temporary soldiers and foreign recruits also implies a return to pre-state formulas from before the 19th century.

The National Defense Directive of 2004, which should orient Spanish military policy for the coming years, does not, in contrast to similar directives in previous periods, refer to the aims of guaranteeing the sovereignty and independence of Spain, its territorial integrity or the constitutional order. Territorial defense has actually been replaced by a security objective shared with the allied states, especially within NATO. But the Spanish government wants to make any participation in an external action conditional on a multilateral mandate and the active decision of the Spanish Parliament, which implies in practice general abstention.

Second, the Spanish state has also ceased to be sovereign in monetary and commercial policies, due to the adoption of the euro and the European common market, and is subject to serious restrictions on budget and fiscal policies by the European stability plans. Foreign trade amounts to up to 60% of the Spanish gross domestic product, three-fourths of which comes from countries of the European Union.

Supranational integration induces higher regional economic specialization and differentiation. Even more than in the past, the Spanish regions that, before fiscal redistributions, attain higher levels of income per capita than the state average are those that are closer to the center of Europe, that is, those located along the traditional border with France: the Basque country, Navarre, La Rioja, Aragon, Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, to which the overprotected Madrid is added. Higher differentiation does not mean higher inequality in terms of per capita income, since, if every region specialized more strongly on certain sectors of activity, all could find ways to economic prosperity.. But economic specialization implies more different regional interests, which foster increasing political demands for self-government. The control of the center over the periphery thus decreases not only in political and administrative terms, but also economic, to which the central government tries to react with territorial redistribution of public funds.

Third, homogenization of language and culture in Spain not only did not culminate into a nation-state of the French type, but has decreased during the last decades. Around one fourth of Spaniards use a language different from Castilian as the main language in their family and private relations and about 40% live in the six territorial autonomous communities in which there are two official languages. The multilingualism of Spanish state citizens includes not only Castilian, Catalan, Galician and Basque, but also Asturian, Aragonese, Arabic, Occitan and Portuguese.

The Spanish state is, thus, not what it was, and neither will it be what it could have been. It actually tends to move increasingly away from the traditional French model of a uniform nation-state. Certainly, public expenditure has increased very much during the present democratic period. In 1975, at the end of the dictatorship, the state spent little more than 20% of the gross domestic product, while thirty years later it has more than doubled that percentage. As the product in real terms (discounting inflation) has also doubled in these thirty years, it turns out that public expenditure in real terms has multiplied by more than four. But whereas in 1975 the central administration spent 90% of all public expenditure (and only 10% was in the hands of municipalities), nowadays the central expenditure is hardly 50% of the total (and the largest part is spent on social security and debt interest). As a proportion of the gross domestic product, the central administration expenditure is, thus, about the same or

even lower than thirty years ago, whilst the main novelty is that a new and extensive administration of the territorial autonomous communities has been built.

In terms of public employees, the degree of decentralization is even greater, since the autonomous communities exert powers in service activities employing many people, such as in education and health care. So while the proportion of public employees in the central administration relative to the total employed population is nowadays lower than thirty years ago, a numerous autonomous administration has been created. Given the decrease in soldiers and marines mentioned above, as well as the decentralization of police and security forces, it turns out that the central administration has consolidated its highest proportion of civil servants in finance, that is, in personnel directly or indirectly involved in collecting taxes.

6. Increasing demands for self-government

The Spanish state of autonomies has generated steady competition between territorial autonomous communities in obtaining a redistribution of public resources. There have been frequent revisions of institutional rules, the division of powers and financial criteria. The 'autonomic state' has not, therefore, become an equilibrium, in the sense of a stable institutional solution for the relations between different territorial communities, but a frame for competition among territories and for the development of increasing demands for self-government.

During the 1970s Spain faced a Dahlian "tragic choice", as mentioned above, between inclusion of political pluralism in the central institutions of the state and self-government of peripheral communities. The dilemma was responded by the Spanish constitution of 1978 with moderate formulas of both proportional representation and political decentralization, under the implicit or explicit threat that stronger pressures to weaken the strength and the centralization of the state could provoke a reaction in favor of dictatorship and "hegemony", to be put also in Dahl's terms.

Thirty years later, however, the terms of the dilemma have changed. As democracy has become irreversible, among other reasons thanks to Spain's membership in the European Union, the degrees of inclusion and decentralization provided by the existing constitutional rules appear to be insufficient to many social and political groups in the periphery. As the central electoral institutions seem difficult to be reformed, due to the blocking capacity of the two larger Spain-wide parties that obtain benefit from them, demands for higher levels of territorial self-government appear as a logical alternative.

Initially, in the late 1970s, there was a convergence between four strategies: the self-government programs of the Catalan, Basque and Galician nationalisms; some expanded demands through several provinces and regions in imitation of the former; the subsequent position of the transition government to give 'coffee for all' or prepare a 'table of cheeses' (as was said at the time); and the federalist tradition of part of the Spanish left. Up to 17 'autonomous' territorial governments were, thus, formed, in most cases without historical precedents. The constitutional rules established in the 1978 constitution implied a distinction between the three autonomous communities with precedents of democratic self-government and particular languages--Catalonia, the Basque country and Galicia--which would have special regimes, and the others, for which a common regime was provided.

But the levels of autonomy and the differences among communities have increased during the following period. First, the Basque country regained its historical privileges ('fueros') as the basis for a special formula of finances permitting the autonomous collection of all taxes and the enactment of other particular institutions. Navarre did the same, but not Catalonia or Galicia. Andalusia adopted from the beginning the model of division of powers

that was initially reserved for only the three 'historic' communities. As a consequence of the entrance into the European Community, the Canary Islands acceded to special fiscal formulas to compensate for their distance from Spain. Later on, the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, also in Africa, were also granted special regimes. Specific language differences, or the condition of being an island, have forged other formulas.

The degree of political pluralism is higher in most autonomous communities than in the central institutions of the state. On the one side, the electoral system for the Spanish parliament is the least proportional of those based on the principle of proportional representation in European countries, while the party system is strongly polarized around two Spain-wide parties. Only single-party cabinets based on a minority of popular votes have been formed in central government. On the other side, multiparty systems and coalition cabinets are common in autonomous governments. An average of eight of the 17 autonomic presidents has not belonged to the party of the prime minister of the central government. In particular, since 1980 Catalonia, Euskadi and the Canary Islands have been governed by local nationalist parties almost without interruption. On several occasions, the Catalan, Basque and Canary nationalist parties have been pivotal in the formation of a legislative majority in the Spanish parliament by whichever Spain-wide party is in power. In exchange, the nationalist parties have not asked for participation in the Spanish government but for more powers and financial resources in their communities, thus fostering a permanent decentralization of the state.

Competition among the different autonomous communities has also been fostered by the lack of 'consociational' mechanisms for multilateral negotiation and cooperation in the institutional framework of the state. In contrast to the usual situation in federal states, the Spanish Senate does not represent territories and tends to have a party composition very similar to that of the lower chamber, the Congress of Deputies, or even one more favorable to the two larger Spain-wide parties. The autonomous communities do not participate formally in the appointment of bodies that are designed to guarantee the division of powers, especially the Constitutional Tribunal, the General Council of the Judicial Power, the Board of the national bank or the Board of public radio and television. In contrast to typical large federal states, there is not a council of autonomic presidents nor regular meetings between these presidents and the Prime minister. The sectorial conferences by members of autonomic governments tend to be the setting for negotiating new transfers of powers between them rather than a coordinating body of Spain-wide public policy.

As a consequence of competitive demands from territorial governments, successive fiscal agreements have been made to increase the amount of resources in the hands of the autonomous communities, but also their new demand. From 1987 on, the government of Catalonia began to organize its own police force on the model of the Basque police, which has replaced the national police and the civil guard in most cases. The Canary Islands, Navarre and Valencia obtained powers in health care beyond those included in their initial statutes of autonomy. During the 1990s, all communities obtained powers in education. From 2004 on, most communities of the Spanish state began to discuss new statutes of autonomy, following the initiative of the Basque country and Catalonia. In all cases the autonomous communities intend to enlarge their self-governing capacity, while some autonomic leaders have explicitly stated their objective of obtaining powers at least as broad as those of the Catalans.

In parallel to this process of thinning the Spanish state, the sentiments of belonging to a Spanish nation have also been weakened. At the same time, the internal cultural cohesion of the population within traditional small nations and new autonomous communities has increased. Internal migrations within Spain ceased by mid-1970s, a moment of economic recession, and did not resume after the establishment of regional autonomous governments a few years later. From that moment on, the diffusion of the Catalan, the Basque and the

Galician languages has been promoted by the regional governments through compulsory education and public media. A few attempts to make old immigrants from other parts of Spain play a significant political role against local nationalisms have failed. In the early 21st century, less than one fourth of the citizens of the Spanish state consider themselves to be only or mainly Spaniards rather than from the autonomous community, and the proportion tends to decrease. Less than 10% would prefer to go back to a unitary state, while among the rest, almost half think that the current degree of decentralization of the 'state of autonomies' is insufficient. (For more details on the working of the Spanish political system in a comparative perspective, see Colomer 1995, 1998, 2002, 2004, 2006).

Conclusion

During the most recent period, the elements of multi-nationality in Spain, already identified by Juan J. Linz in a long-term historical perspective, have increased rather than decreased. In the 21st century, building a Spanish nation-state, in the sense of a political organization based on effective sovereignty, power monopoly and the homogenization of the population, is an unviable endeavor.

Indeed democracy has proven to be compatible with configurations alternative to the traditional model of nation-state, as presumed by Linz. But, against old assumptions, the establishment of democracy in Spain has not increased its internal cohesion. The Spanish state has not only sacrificed its capacity to guarantee the defense of the territory and provide a currency and a protected market to the European Union, NATO and other organizations of imperial size. It has also lost a large part of its capacity to collect taxes, maintain order and security for its citizens, create public works programs and organize basic services such as education and health care, in favor of autonomous communities. The two processes are closely related. Integration in the European 'empire' and access to very large markets increase regional differentiation and creates new opportunities for small nations, such as Catalonia, the Basque country and other communities, to seek alternative formulas to their traditional peripheral role within the Spanish state. Against some expectations, local nationalisms have not been blunted by old internal migrations within Spain.

Permanent demands for increasing self-government have made the Spanish model of territorial autonomies not an equilibrium institutional formula. The state of autonomies contains elements of 'asymmetric federalism' by which different territorial governments seek different political and institutional formulas. But, in the context of the Spanish democratic institutions, they have developed increasing inter-territorial competition rather than state-wide-cooperation. Certainly the Spanish democratic regime lacks elements of 'consociationalism'. It rather creates high levels of concentration of power in the center of the state, which indirectly fosters demands for higher levels of self-government in the periphery. As the founding treaty of Rome postulated an "ever closer union" within Europe, the most likely future includes ever open differentiations within Spain.

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