



Absolutism vs. Limited Government: A Genealogical Overview of Ruptures and Continuity in Catalan Nationalist Struggle

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Abstract

Nationalist movements and civil wars of national (in)cohesion are recurring patterns in history of Spain. Since its inception in 1469, after the Royal marriage of Isabella and Ferdinand and merger of their states in Spanish union;, the state is facing the paradox of evolving a political system for culturally diverse sub-national groups like Basque, Galician and Catalan. One recent event of (in)cohesion is declaration of direct rule by Spanish Senate in response to Catalan parliament declaration of independence on 27th October 2017.

The prime cause of ethnic nationalism in Spain, according to this historical comparative study; aimed at tracing the genealogy of Catalan nationalist struggle; is merger of different regions and people at different stages of economic and political development in a single political system. Catalan was on climax of renaixena, with a mature civil society aware of communal rights and common good while Castile was still in medieval mode of establishing absolute monarchial authority. After the death of Ferdinand, region detested all efforts on Castilian part to relegate it to status of internal colony or a Castilian province, whether it was the events of 1640 followed by Twelve Years War, Spanish war of succession 1714, and Franco Civil War 1936-39.

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The paper will provide an account of rupture and continuity to contest authoritarian, absolutist, totalitarian tendencies of central government by Catalan. Furthermore the paper will give perspective scenarios and present costs-benefits analysis of secessionist nationalism for both regions Spain and Catalan at present.

Key Words: Spain, Nationalism, Catalan, Absolutism, Limited Government

Introduction

Nationalism and self-determination remain an unfinished business uniting yet dividing people according to US/THEM binaries. The first wave of nationalism started in Europe with protestant revolution and Spain being the state representing the Holy Roman Empire faced the challenges of nationalism. Eighty Years War (1568-1648) ended in separation of northern and southern Netherlands and the establishment of Dutch Republic. At present though the Spain is member of EU, yet different ethno-regions of Spanish federation like Basque, Galacians and Catalan detest the state for both discursive and material reasons. Narratives of identity are sustained by material causes of inequality. Oppression employed to silence the voices of protest, curbing the free institutions and identity symbols serve as catalyst generating more signs of cultural and everyday resistance. According to Catalonian narratives appearing in media and social media, the PEOPLE of Catalan region are; a nation without a state; a society suffering the face-off of its identity symbols; an economy with a potential to compete for globally, and accounting one-fourth of Spain's exports is crippling due to resource plunder.

In recent history when Catalan Statue of Autonomy 2006¹ was declared unconstitutional by Spain Constitutional Court, Catalan people expressed their right of self-determination in a symbolic non-binding referendum in 2014 expressed their right of self-determination declared unconstitutional by Spain constitutional court. The activity was repeated in October 2017 referendum on October 2017. The Parliament being the representative of

¹ The Statue of autonomy was approved by referendum on June 18th 2006, supplanting the Statute of Sau dated 1979, providing Catalonia basic institutional regulations under the Spanish constitution 1978; defining rights and obligations of Catalonian citizens, political institutions of political community of Catalonia, at the same time defining the limits of relations with Spain central government and rest of Spain and finances of Catalonian government.

people's will, declared independence on behalf of PEOPLE. The Central government of Spain responded by dissolving Parliament of Catalan and curbing the basic liberties of the people and their institutions and using coercive force to save national (in)cohesion. Hence the world witnessed the Spanish House once again divided against it, involved in a civil war yet another time. This contest of wills expressed in nationalistic identity jargons from both sides has a long history as both sides suffered the wounds of internal strife, and developed the psyche of being betrayed.

In words of Mansterrat Guibernal² "The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of living", and their actions and reactions bring human ego at play with humiliation of defeat and pride of conquest. The identity war within Spanish federation date back to the War of Succession in 1714; or even later i.e. Barcelona uprising in 1640 followed by Twelve Years War; or even to the time when two regions at different levels of economic and political development entered in union in 1479 (a marriage of inconvenience), as aftermath of dynastic marriage of Isabella and Ferdinand in 1469.

The paper will provide a genealogy of rupture and continuity to contest authoritarian, absolutist, totalitarian tendencies of central government dominated by Castile. Though different regions of Spanish federation have a long brawl for autonomy, the study is limited to Catalan. The paper aims to deconstruct the repeated attempts of expression of self on part of Catalan people and unveil the underlying economic and psychological causes leading to one after another failed attempts to secession. Furthermore the paper will give perspective scenario and present costs-benefits analysis of secessionist nationalism for both regions Spain and Catalan at present.

The paper is divided into the following segments.

1. Spanish Union and Merger of Two Regions with Divergent Political Cultures
2. Absolutism Vs Limited Government: War of National (in)cohesion in Age of Spanish Hegemony
3. Weary Generations of Franco, Residue of History and Divided House

² (Guibernal 2004, 2).

4. Spain/Catalan at Crossroads: Cost-Benefit Analysis of Parting ways

Spanish Union and Merger of Two Regions with Divergent Political Culture

The history of an independent Catalan region, comprising only 6% of the Spain territory dates back to 795 when Charlmagne created a buffer state Marca Hispana or March of Barcelona, as a security barrier between Umayyad Moors of Andalus and Carolingian Frankish Empire. The region was popularly known as March of Barcelona. The region was part of Crown of Aragon since 11th century.

The union of Ferdinand decentralized, federal empire, comprising of Aragon-Catalan-Valencia regions, at advanced stages of political and economic development; with Isabella Castilian region primarily a peasant-nomadic society, isolated from the rest of Europe, organized and united by a crusading spirit of domineering and glory; remained a mere dynastic union. The two regions were united under the banner of Catholicism but they retained their administrative autonomy. It was common to refer to *Las Espanas* as plural.

The Catalan-Aragon federation with Mediterranean port Barcelona, the cultural and economic capital of Catalan was one of the first European regions to be urbanized and industrialized. The federation oriented itself towards the Mediterranean, was commercial in spirit and cosmopolitan in outlook; while the mental horizon of Castile was limited due to its parochialism and isolation from the rest of Europe. Despite its limited commercial and political interactions with the outside world, Castile developed a strong monarchy, though subservient and sometimes in alliance with a dominant church, both having a dream of Christian Revivalism and world conquest. Castile was the society organized for war; a crusading war. Its iconic heroes were not men with wealth but those who fought and prayed.³ But even in the age of faith during Middle Ages (13th & 14th B.C), when “Church Militant” acted either as separate state or a state within state with military means to carry out defensive and offensive

³ J H Elliott, *The Revolt of the Catalans: A Study in the Decline of Spain 1598-1648* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) p. 3.

warfare; Catalan region was perhaps the first space where Church was subservient to secular feudal power.⁴

The Cataluniya was not a political unit but a geographical expression comprising of independent and quasi-independent feudalities recognizing the “over-lordship of count of Barcelona”, in turn, be a component of Ferdinand federation of principalities. Although both Castile and Ferdinand Aragon-Catalan-Galacia-Valencia federations were parliamentary monarchies at time of Union, the king’s powers in states and crowns of Aragon were limited to administering justice, extraction of revenue and rising of armies, with all legal restrictions on authority.⁵

Hence, Spain came into existence housing two divergent political cultures with different economic and social tilts of populace into a single state. It was a state born with the ambition of hegemony and world conquest, as at the end of triumphant conclusion of Crusades, the crusading warriors of Castile were not content on past glory, and there were new worlds to conquer for crusading warriors. Motivated by 3Gs, (god, glory and gold) Castile grew exceptionally through its access to America(s), while Aragon lost its Mediterranean and European colonies. Hence power lag between two regions started and Castile and Madrid became the dominant military and economic powers of the time. Spain role of world economic primus internally led to the domination of Castile on other regions of the Spain, relegated to status of internal colony.

Absolutism VS Limited Government: War of National (In) Cohesion in Age of Spanish Hegemony

In the age of Spanish hegemony, the inequality between territories of Ferdinand and Castile increased. American conquest was attributed to efforts of Castile Conquistadors ensuring constant stream of Gold and Silver from the new World, contributing to Royal exchequer of Hapsburg and honored and rewarded in turn. Castilians enjoyed lucrative offices in the governance of New World and in old-world Capital was shifted to Madrid relegating Barcelona to a secondary status.

⁴ J. Lee Shneidman, *The Rise of the Aragonese Catalan Empire 1200-1350* (New York: New York University Press, 1970) p. 234.

⁵ J H Elliott, *The Revolt of the Catalans: A Study in the Decline of Spain 1598-1648* ([n.p]: University Press, 1963) p. 11.

The Catalan-Aragon perceived it as a schema to reduce them to provinces of Castile. “Drunk with World conquest”, 16th Century Castilian opted for the way of domination in place of seeking cooperation with other territories of peninsula.⁶ As Castilian grew in power and wealth, the popular perception developed in Catalan that its resources are used to fight Spain’s external wars. By 1590’s conditions of most of the inhabitants of Barcelona was miserable as a result of tense relations between Catalan and Royal authorities. As Spain economy declined during the reign of Philip III (1598-1621) extraction of revenue from Catalan became a royal urgency.⁷

The conflict between regional liberties and claims of central government was deep rooted till 1640 when Catalan severed their allegiance to the Spanish monarchy and elected France’s Louis XIII as their new king. The movement started as Reaper rebellion in protest to Castilian orders of increasing taxes and quartering troops in peasant houses. The war required Catalan support against France but local elites and population, Reaper war and its hymn *Els Segadors* are the powerful symbols of Catalan identity and treated as national anthem of Catalan chanted on Catalan national day 11th September as well as in matches of Football Club Barcelona. The most interesting feature of 1640 Barcelona uprising was involvement of PEOPLE (the artisans of Catalan, comprising half of the population of Barcelona, the members city council) in revolution to protect ancient liberties of their homeland. As, we have discussed earlier that since Middle Ages Catalan remained a union of quasi autonomous units with eminence of Barcelona; where, Counsell de Cent owed the allegiance of subjects of the County; inhabited by lower middle class artisans, merchants and petite bourgeoisie. Council due to its representative nature had a considerable advantage over viceroys, monarchy and diputació.⁸

At a time when Spanish hegemony was at its zenith, the revolt in Barcelona was induced by a monarchial commandment making military service compulsory. The other obvious reason was the burden of heavy taxation for sake of imperial wars. The Twelve Year war followed by the revolt of

⁶ J H Elliott, *The Revolt of the Catalans: A Study in the Decline of Spain 1598-1648* (Cambridge: University Press, 1963) pp. 11-15.

⁷ Luis R. Corteguera, *For the Common Good: Popular Politics in Barcelona 1580-1640* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2002) p. x.

⁸ Luis R. Corteguera, *For the Common Good: Popular Politics in Barcelona 1580-1640* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2002) p. xi.

Barcelona in 1640⁹ affected the Spanish monarchy's ability to maintain its eminent position in European politics. The other events of Catalan resistance history Revolt of Barretinas 1687-89¹⁰, and Spanish war of succession 1701-14. Though there were many efforts to assimilate Catalan in dominant Castilian/Spanish culture yet these resulted in generation of cultural symbols for Catalan *renaixencas*. Though Catalan movements of self were penetrated across rural areas and urban centers yet one recurring trend is that elites remain against or alienated to cause yet wealthy commoners actively participated in all movements raising nationalist slogans of culture and linguistic pride.

Weary Generations of Franco, Residue of History and Divided House

The contest between Absolutism and liberties, between Madrid (Castile led center) and Barcelona (Catalan and other sub-national groups) entered in Twentieth century with all the religious and ideological colorings. In 1936 Army revolted against the legitimate government of second Republic under leadership of Franco. The base of Franco support was the Army, the Catholic Church, and conservative segments of Bourgeoisie and land owning classes. National Catholicism was the ideology engineered to incur legitimacy on new regime. The other side of the ideological binary relied on liberal ideology of democracy, party system, freedom and civil rights of PEOPLE, and economic, political and cultural autonomy of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galacia.¹¹

During Franco Civil War Republicans fought for democracy, social equality and justice, freedom of thought and a secular progressive state. Nationalists believed that they were participating in a Holy Crusade for God and country. They saw Spain as Christian civilization's last bastion against atheism, communism and International Jewry.¹² The divide was clearly outlined by a letter of Bishop Salamanca Enrique "The Two cities", in which he described the civil war as crusade, and highlighted the Christian heroism of the nationals and the barbarity of the Republicans. The letter vividly

⁹ Luis R. Corteguera, *For the Common Good: Popular Politics in Barcelona 1580-1640* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2002) p. 12.

¹⁰ Regina Grafe, *Distant Tyranny: Market Power and Backwardness in Spain 1650-1800* (New Jersey USA: Princeton University Press, 2012) p. 76.

¹¹ Paul D Escott, *Uncommonly Savage: Civil War and Remembrance in Spain and the United States* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2014) p. 34.

¹² Paul D Escott, *Uncommonly Savage: Civil War and Remembrance in Spain and the United States* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2014) p. 5.

presented the contrast of good and evil and made a distinction between “earthly” and “celestial city. Providing rhetoric of legitimacy he painted the celestial city with love of God and heroism and martyrdom as norm. George Orwell believes that, the Catholic Church was to the Spanish people in Catalonia and Aragon was a racket must be replaced by anarchism. To compete the discipline of religious rank and file, revolutionaries counted on the political consciousness- on an astounding why? Why the orders must be obeyed? Discipline of Republicans was nonetheless equal to other side as they were on weaker side of power equation and willfully making amends of various shortages, i.e. food and munitions.

Franco was constructed as defender of not only Spain but also the universal faith. Franco adopted the title of Caudillo establishing his linkage with the warrior leader of Castile in the middle ages. Modern Caudillo (Franco) defined himself as a warrior God against infidels who were a threat for faith and culture of Spain. Adherence to this belief system continued at the end of civil war.

End of civil war witnessed the human ego at play. Defeated Southerners resisted the social consequences by opting for identity symbols and preserving the Catalan language as icon of their cultural uniqueness. On the other hand Franco charge with the zeal and pride of a winner, adopted the slogan “One Motherland, One State, One Caudillo”, reminiscent of Hitler slogan “Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Fuhrer”.¹³ It was not only a replication of sloganeering but also absolutist tendencies on part of central government as Franco sent three hundred thousand to four hundred thousand Republicans to concentration camps and purged fifty thousand primary school teachers for holding the Republican views.¹⁴ At the end of Civil War in 1939 the nationalization policy that in effect constructed surveillance state, a modern state with objective of cultural and linguistic homogenization of the country.¹⁵ The citizen of Spain in general and people of Catalonia, Basque country and the Galacia in particular, identifying

¹³ Mansterrat Guibernal, *Catalan Nationalism: Francoism, Transition & Democracy* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004) p.40

¹⁴ Paul D Escott, *Uncommonly Savage: Civil War and Remembrance in Spain and the United States* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2014) P.114-17.

¹⁵ Paul D Escott, *Uncommonly Savage: Civil War and Remembrance in Spain and the United States* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2014) P. 36.

themselves with democracy had to experience authoritarianism, conservatism and international isolation.¹⁶

The Francoian years aggrandized the already existing tension in Spanish Union giving birth to “historical memory of wounds and memory played a pivotal role in future division”. The memory and remembrance of wounds and how the groups involved in blood battles remember debate and argue about the trauma years and how the past divisions determine the course of evolution, translate the meaning of reconciliation, and accept or discard the economic and social changes of post conflict years. The role of historical wounds in postwar discourse of right and wrong and identity mania accompanied.¹⁷

Spain/Catalan at the Crossroads: Cost-Benefit Analysis of Parting ways

The Spain has a history of more than three hundred years of managing a political-economic milieu in which Catalan can be categorized as ‘workshop of Spain’ plying a crucial role as developed manufacturing economy since second half of 18th century. The first wave of nationalism started with Holland independence in 1640. In the same year Catalan was offered to be a part of France. Despite all nationalist sloganeering, and resonance of *Els Segadors (We are a Nation, We Decide)* Catalan remain part of Spanish kingdom. In 20th century demands of autonomy within Spanish union granted and taken back time and again. Catalan first obtained a statute of autonomy in 1932 approved in a referendum of 99% of voters, approved by the Spanish parliament on Sep 9th 1932, during the Second Republic of Spain; declaring Catalonia autonomous state within Spanish republic promising the possibility of independent sovereign state based on self-determination claims of Catalan people. After the death of Franco Statue of Sau,, a constitutional law promulgated on 18th Sep 1979 acknowledged Catalan autonomous status within the Kingdom of Spain. Period from 1980-2003 Catalan was under the leadership of Jordi Pujol moderate leadership, forging relations with Madrid, at the same time bargaining increased autonomy of Catalan in return to allegiance with Spanish union and constitution. It paved way for approval of New Statute of Autonomy supplanting the Statue of Sau by both the central and Catalan parliaments.

¹⁶ Paul Preston & Ann L Mackenzie, *The Republic Beseiged: Civil War in Spain 1936-1939* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 1996).

¹⁷ Paul D Escott, *Uncommonly Savage: Civil War and Remembrance in Spain and the United States* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2014) p. 6.

The Statute was initially placed in a referendum in 2006. Though, the statute was challenged in Spanish constitutional court that declared 14 out of 277 articles of statute unconstitutional in 2010.

A new phase of protest started with the demand of *Catalonia; a new European Union state*. On 11th September 2012 almost two million people participated in a mass protest chanting *Els Segador* as Hymn of collective resistance; a voice of unity for PEOPLE. It was a moment of self-expression for Catalan signified in hoisting of Catalan flag on public displays. Since 2012 Catalan national day celebrations with cultural expression became a regular feature. In September 2013 symbol of Catalan unity to achieve right of self-determination was signified in 250 miles long human chain. In 2014 participation in national day of Catalonia raised unto 9 million. First referendum on the question of self-determination and complete autonomy was held in 2014. It was symbolic non-binding independence referendum to detest Spain's constitutional court ruling.

More than 80 percent opted for independence while 2.3 million casted vote among 5.4 million eligible voters. Catalan leaders Artur Mas was bared from holding public office in 2017. In the same year another referendum was held in which 90 percent of the participants opted for independence though the voters turnout was 42 percent. Later declaration independence was signed by Catalan parliament. Spanish senate immediately responded by invoking article 155 of the constitution giving central government the direct rule in Catalonia.¹⁸

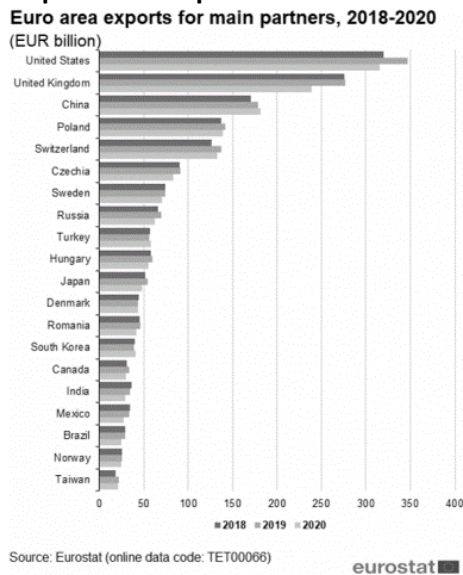
Twelve Catalan leaders were charged under rebellion, sedition and miss use of public money. Catalan population was divided on the issue of freedom and independence though the majority supports the Catalan independence cause and even in re-election pro-independence parties won 47.7 percent of votes and 70 seats in the house of 135. Catalan movement is longest running movement of Europe is a result of failed nation building efforts by the absolute Monarchs and military regimes opting to repress cultural symbols of identity that leads to identity crisis and feeling of victimhood, on the very bases of nationalism.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ernesto Castaneda and Sebastian Megens-Sedor , 'The Movement for Catalan Independence ', in *Social Movements 1768-2018*, ed. by Charles Tilly (New York : Routledge , 2020), pp. 208-219.

¹⁹ (Castaneda and Sebastian 2020)

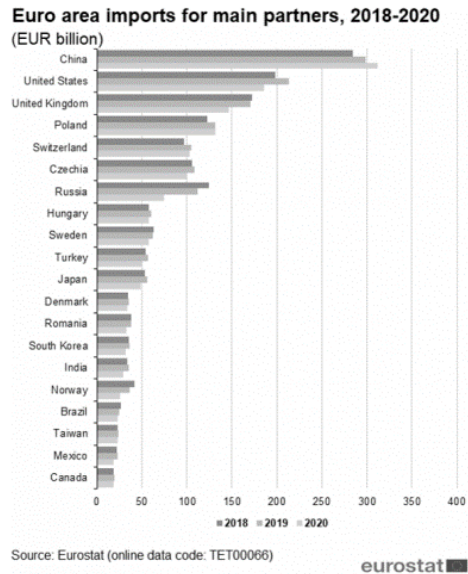
Tough the region comprises only 6 percent of the total kingdom of Spain territory with 25 percent contribution in total GDP, is not only the wealthiest region of Spanish Kingdom but also the wealthiest region of whole Europe. In 2009 Catalonia GDP per capita was 28200€ not more than rest of Spain 23541€ but also ahead of United Kingdom (26223€), France 25429€ and Italy 24364€. These estimates are given as the justification of independence claims that with the tax burden imposed by rest of Spain Catalonia will become even richer. Contrary to claims of Spain robbing Catalonia and depiction of region experiencing tyranny and economic exploitation, Catalonia gained a pre-eminent industrial position during Franco Regime and benefited from investment in chemical, petro-chemical and auto-mobile industry due to Franco's economic policies. Though the economic lag between Catalonia and other regions of Spain decreased yet Catalonia leads in economy remains intact. Even in Franco's period the region maintained its privileged position. After his death major events in Spain's economic history is joining European commission in 1986 due to Catalans comparative advantage on manufacturing and exports the region benefited more than other regions of Spain.²⁰

Table 1. Catalan's exports and imports in Million Euros²¹



²⁰ CLEMENTE POLO, 'The secessionist challenge and the economic consequences of Independence' (Independent Research , INSTITUTO DE ESTUDIOS ECONÓMICOS, 2014), pp. 81-107.

²¹ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Extra-euro_area_trade_in_goods#Increase_in_extra-euro_area_trade



Despite the fact that the Catalonian regions' economic exceeds UK, France Italy and Germany, can Catalonia survive as viable economic independent unit? As all this prosperity of Catalan can be owed to being the part of two mega economies i.e. Spain and EU, what can be the economic repercussion for independence for Catalan? As an independent state what will be the socio-economic consequences of flight of capital on internal and external migrants?

As pro-independence group is boisterous about fiscal dividends of independence suggest that Spain robs us and Catalonia is paying for welfare for other regions of Spain. According to these claims 16000 million euros, about 8 percent of Catalonia GDP is taken away every year. To build their case for self-determination and autonomy they claim that this amount can be spent on Catalonia's infrastructure, raising pensions and general welfare of the people. In contrast to that Catalan is not an independent economy but a part of two open economies of Spain and EU. Spanish federation grants maximum economic autonomy to its units and allows open flow of goods and services. Though economic crisis of whole country effects the regional economies being the workshop of Spain the industrialized economy total exports accounts for 66 percent of GDP of Catalan and around 50 percent of this 66 percent is earned from rest of Spain, and the remaining 50 percent form European Union countries like

Germany, France and rest of the world. While the statistics indicate that Catalan is in deficit trade relation, in relation with rest of the world where imports exceeds exports.²²

In case of independence Catalan region will not secede economic ties with Spain but also with EU. To become a fresh member of EU it has to follow a loathsome entry process, till its recognition as a member state it has to rely on local currency in place of euro. Even a most optimistic analysis can prove that exchange with EU countries in local currency will create trade deficit, and economic dividends accrued at present will drop exponentially. The socio-economic impacts of independence will be more lasting in nature. Being the part of two open economies i.e. Spain and EU, the cities of Catalan region attracted the immigrants from Spain and Rest of the world. Over the centuries city like Barcelona become more and more cosmopolitan in nature. The migrants from Spain and rest of the world can't create affinity with nationalist aspirations. In case of the Catalan secession from Spain the migrants (internal and external) will move to other region of Spain like Madrid, carrying with them a bulk of capital, leaving a negative impact on region's economy. As we have already discussed the positive impacts of Franco's assimilative policies in form of urban industrial development. The independence will lead to disinvestment and movement of industry to other competitive regions of Spain.

In course of discussion of historical continuities and ruptures, it is revealed that Catalan's elite never supported the secessionist tendencies, though narrative always remained appealing for more prosperous commoners. Throughout the history the central government has curbed the slogans and demands of fair treatment with absolute modes of repression and curbing the identity and culture of people demanding equality the economic utopia of independent Catalan along with cultural expressions has a mass appeal for people especially unemployed youth.

Conclusion

Since inception the Spain's different ethnicities felt themselves as victim of Internal Colonization of Castilian Region. In Efforts of National integration the regional languages and cultures were suppressed. Catalan was the

²² CLEMENTE POLO, 'The secessionist challenge and the economic consequences of Independence' (Independent Research, INSTITUTO DE ESTUDIOS ECONÓMICOS, 2014), pp. 81-107.

region with a growing middle Class, an urbanized society with iconic port city Barcelona reflecting its commercial zeal. The middle classes were politically aware even in Hapsburg Empire and revolted to protect their basic Freedoms. Center led by Castile under Hapsburg Ruling used the resources of Catalan for external warfare. Hegemonic wars remained a profitable business only for Castile as rewards from Colonies were unequally distributed between Castile and other Regions. The crisis of 1640, in words of Elliott was not only a crisis of political and military leadership; it was a crisis of economic organization and constitutional structure, brewing since long.²³

Franco Civil war broadened the ideological chasm between two regions. The civil war became an integral component of group cognition and memory of wounds practically endorsed the two city hypotheses. The historical residue of bitterness reflected in cultural arena like literature where the authors like George Orwell pay “homage to Catalonia”, courage to not accept defeat and fight asymmetrical power. Both sides opted for contrasting ideological symbols of transcendental importance. Nationalists under Franco believed that they were participating in a holy crusade for God and protecting Spain as last embankment against communism and atheism. While the lofty principle for Republicans were social equality, justice, freedom of expression and thought, and a secular progressive state²⁴. Present generations still carry the weight of embittered history. The two groups translate each other actions in an idiom of misperception.

To this day the identity symbols and mini battles are fought in football grounds between Barcelona and Madrid, the iconic two cities. Despite the ideological coloring, the present day conflict is also material in nature as Catalan feel the economic burdens of fiscal transfer to other regions especially Castile (Madrid) .

The Spanish center translates the declaration of independence as an attempt by a relatively wealthy region hoping to secede from a poorer nation. It is considered that Barcelona overstates Madrid’s repressive tendencies. On the other hand Catalan sees it as Madrid effort to plunder

²³ J H Elliott, *The Revolt of the Catalans: A Study in the Decline of Spain 1598-1648* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) p. 523.

²⁴ Paul D Escott, *Uncommonly Savage: Civil War and Remembrance in Spain and the United States* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2014) p. 3.

the surplus from richest regions using taxes and forced fiscal transfers. The Catalan economic historians claim that region accounts for about One Fourth of Spain's exports. But for every Euro Catalan pay in taxes, only 57 cents are spent on Catalan. Prior to central taxes, Catalonia is the fourth richest of Seventeen autonomous regions of Spanish Federation. After Taxes its position relegate at Ninth as an aftermath of forced redistribution in name of national integration.²⁵

Though the claim of Catalan is that it is paying for the welfare of rest of Spain and with independence and incorporation in EU as unit, it will benefit from exports to EU as exports constitute 66% of Catalan GDP that comprise 25 % of total Spanish GDP. But important thing is that Catalan economy is embedded in economic system of Spain that is its major trading partner selling more to rest of the Spain than buying from it. Hence rest of Spain contributes in prosperity of Catalan as well comprising only the 6% territory of the Union. Further entry in EU is not an easy process and Catalan in case of secession has to initially pay the cost prior to actualizing the perceived prosperity. The causes at root of conflict between center and regions in Spain are both ideological and material in nature, where regions detested the efforts of center to create absolute state by plundering resources of region in name of freedoms and liberties to reversely equate with religious rhetoric. Further the region being the border zone between other continental powers like France, and Catalan speaking population present in France Andorra and Italy, the identity symbols and nationalist narrative are kept alive during long course of history through irredentist efforts of neighboring states to disadvantage of Spain.

²⁵ Omar G Encarnacion, *Democracy without Justice in Spain: The Politics of Forgetting* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014) p.59.