

# Does symbolic recognition matter?

Secession-inducing features of symbolic recognition in two autonomous  
sub-state entities within Spain

Theodor Emanuelsson

# Abstract

This essay is a hypothesis-generating study that theorizes on secession-inducing features of symbolic recognition in places divided by national, ethnic, linguistic or cultural diversity, something that has generally been overlooked in the research field of constitutional design, secessionism and power sharing systems. The hypothesis is partially tested using a most-similar research design for two autonomous sub-state entities in Spain (Galicia and Catalonia) to show indications of the hypothesized relationship. It suggests that rejection of symbolic recognition could work as a secession-inducing mechanism in the short-term with effects on citizens' preferences on independence in sub-state entities. Rejection of symbolic affirmations can give leeway to secessionist agendas and was certainly a trigger mechanism in the growth of secessionism in Catalonia from 2010.

*Keywords: Symbolic recognition, Autonomy institutions, Secession, Catalonia, Galicia*

Words: 8288 excluding Abstract and List of references.

# Table of contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Research purpose	2
1.2 Research question	3
2. Previous research	4
2.1 Three explanatory theories	5
2.1.1 The will and the capacity to secede	5
2.1.2 Institutional design	6
2.1.3 Economic factors	7
2.2 Recognition in the research field	8
4. Theoretical hypothesis	9
5. Research design	13
5.1 Most-similar case-study	13
5.2 Research cases	14
5.3 Data	15
6. Case-study comparison	17
6.1 Catalonia	20
6.2 Galicia	24
6.3 Comparative discussion	27
7. Concluding remarks	29
List of references	31

# 1. Introduction

Originating from Europe and based on the principle of "one nation-one state," the modern state system with its functions, mechanisms and logic is broadly established on our planet as the only viable way of organizing societies and politics. Even though the system may seem stable, everlasting and difficult to change, we should be cautious of thinking about states and nations in terms of constants. In the last 100 years we have seen major changes in the way states are organized, their size and structure as well as the nationalism that accompanies them. O'Leary illustrates recent changes of our state-system in his introductory chapter in *Right-sizing the State*:

"In 1900, empires dominated most of the earth's surface: the Austro-Hungarian, the Belgian, the British, the Chinese, the Dutch, the French, the German, the Italian, the Ottoman, the Russian, the Spanish, and the Portuguese empires held most of Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Australasia, and Oceania under direct and indirect rule. By 2000 these empires had gone or had been reduced to rumps, and the significantly named United Nations had nearly 200 member-states."<sup>1</sup>

The number of internationally recognized states has increased tremendously in the last 100 years or so. In addition, the structure and ideology that govern these states has also been modified, in different ways. In 1900, we had 55 states; whereas 99 years later, we had 192 states; with a small increase to 195 recognized states since 1999.<sup>2</sup> Today 25 countries use a federal system within which 40 percent of the world's population reside. They constitute some of the largest states, for example the US, Canada, Germany, Brazil and India.<sup>3</sup> The federal system has different purposes and functions in different polities. The institutions could be used as a safeguard against challenges from controversial leadership at the national level, organize large states with regional issues or as a way to manage conflicts driven by nationality/ethnicity. This study will focus on the latter, management relating to conflicts of national, ethnic, linguistic and cultural relevance in one arguably multinational state.

While reflecting on the capacity of federal and other devolved (decentralized) autonomy institutions, to manage conflicts in ethnically divided places there is an apparent enigma. Minority self-rule within a state can produce solutions for immediate or long-term conflicts as well as

---

<sup>1</sup> O'Leary, 2001. *Right-sizing the State*. p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Freedom House 2000, 2018

<sup>3</sup> Forum of Federations

providing secessionists with capacity and the institutional framework to go from co-existence under one state to separation/independence. On the one hand, granting minorities autonomy institutions may seem like the best political device - which certainly align with ideas and values of liberal democracy - to manage these conflicts. The subunit within the state can decide over and work to solve issues that are considered to be exclusively regional. Such institutions generally provide collective representation of larger interests and give more power to regionally specific interests. On the other hand, the same arrangement recognizes and may even enhance the perceived differences between groups. In addition the institutions provide the subunits with institutional tools for potential secession. It could strengthen identities, facilitate mobilization for independence and create the institutions that are needed for secession. Erk and Anderson illustrate the paradox succinctly: "Here, in a nutshell, is the paradox: federalism has features that are both secession inducing and secession preventing."<sup>4</sup>

The United Nations development report from 2004 states that "accommodating people's demands for their inclusion in society, for respect of their ethnicity, religion, and language takes more than democracy and equitable growth". They also stress that "power sharing arrangements have broadly proven to be critical in resolving tensions"<sup>5</sup>.

## 1.1 Research purpose

This study aims to explore secession-inducing features of one matter regarding recognition of autonomous sub-state entities in democratic countries. The hypothesis relates to the relevance of symbolic recognition. It is an additional aspect to institutional design for differences in mobilization of separatist and nationalist agendas. The study empirically examines one democratic country, the Kingdom of Spain (hereafter Spain). This country has implemented autonomy institutions for various groups within its borders. Spain has a system that on the surface may seem more prone to accommodate differences than other comparable systems in Europe, in relation to their differences in the extent of delegated political powers. Within Spain I compare two subunits. One subunit has attempted to gain independence through the act of holding an unconstitutional referendum on whether to stay or secede (Catalonia) and one has not (yet) attempted to gain independence

---

<sup>4</sup> Erk & Anderson, 2010. *The Paradox of Federalism*. p. 2

<sup>5</sup> Human Development Report, 2004. "Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World". p. 7

(Galicia). My intention is to contribute to the understanding of the will to secede in states with power sharing arrangements from the perspective of symbolic recognition.

## 1.2 Research question

- Does rejection of desired symbolic recognition by the central state have secession-inducing effects?

## 2. Previous research

In the last two decades, researchers have noticed "a boom in the study of federalism," in which accommodation of territorial divisions and management of ethnic/linguistic conflicts are prescribed as policy options.<sup>6</sup>

The introduction of constitutional arrangements that devolve power from the centre to the periphery is one of the strategies available to ethnically divided societies in order to resolve or de-escalate conflicts. "Cantonisation/federalism" is one of the more commonly used macro-methods of conflict regulation in the modern era that aims to manage conflicts instead of eliminating them.<sup>7</sup> Cantonisation and federalization as conflict regulating strategies are distinct from each other but still similar in many ways. Cantonisation is regarded as devolution organized in regard to ethnic and territorial differences. Political power is devolved from the centre of the multinational state to smaller distinguishable subunits. The subunits attain political institutions and "mini-sovereignty" within their administrative borders. Cantonisation is different from decentralization in the sense that the institutions are created to take national, ethnic or linguistic differences into account.<sup>8</sup> The state does not necessarily need to divide the entirety of its territory into subunits if it is only a smaller part of the country that has national/ethnic differences. Federations are generally larger provinces that enjoy the same sort of power as cantons. Federalism seems to be most effective as a conflict regulating strategy in societies where the national/ethnic groups are more geographically separated. In the areas where groups are more concentrated, federalism may seem natural and helps to keep the state from disintegration or partition. Keeping a state larger, although not nationally/ethnically homogeneous, may have economic and geopolitical benefits. Federal states have a larger internal market, a single currency and substantial reduction in transactional costs in addition to potentially being a more influential geopolitical player as a unified state rather than multiple smaller states. Although federalization or cantonisation in theory seems to be solid conflict regulators with democratic and economic benefits compared to other strategies, empirically they have a questionable track record of successfully managing conflicts.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Erk & Anderson 2010. p. 1

<sup>7</sup> McGarry & O'Leary, 1994. "The Political Regulation of National and Ethnic Conflict". p. 94-95

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, s. 110

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, s. 111-112

## 2.1 Three explanatory theories

The literature points towards three dimensions of whether power sharing institutions based on national/ethnic differences will have secession-inducing or secession-preventing results. These dimensions are difficult to isolate and may influence each other. Researchers have not yet come to a consensus regarding the reason why we find very different outcomes from similar sets of institutions. These dimensions are: the will and capacity to secede, institutional design, and economic factors.

### 2.1.1 The will and the capacity to secede

Firstly, Erk and Anderson point out will and capacity as two crucial factors. There is a convoluted relationship between the will and the capacity to secede. They can affect each other in different ways under different circumstances. This dimension mainly deals with the internal politics of the subunit and with the subunit's relationship with the state.<sup>10</sup> The will to secede can originate from strong nationalism, historical conflicts and oppression of the potentially secessionist group and the group's opinion on their influence in the political system on the state-wide level. When minority groups do not enjoy self-rule the will may be high but the capacity to bring about secession or divorce from the state might not be possible. There may be no institutions that easily can take over the realm of politics, no centre of power within the minority unit, no guarantees that the divorce would be successful or even that it will have a significant chance to happen as well as no easy mobilization or debate forum for support of secession. The capacity to bring about a divorce is increased with the introduction of territorial power sharing institutions. The subunit gains a political system of its own, whether substantial or not, which should make matters easier. In some cases power sharing institutions decrease the will to secede when the subunit gains autonomy. But in others, it fuels secessionist dreams of independence. The institutions create both the tools for secession and for the management of territorial diversity and conflict.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Erk & Anderson, 2010. p. 6

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 2



## 2.1.2 Institutional design

Some political scientists emphasize the importance of institutional design. This dimension takes the power structure of the institutions into consideration for determining if they will manage the conflict and be sufficient for secession-prevention. The structure of the subunit(s), the division of power, the representation in central institutions and the legal system are essential in this context. The traditional alignment of constitutional design as a management tool is on a spectrum from “federalism to administrative decentralization”.<sup>12</sup> This dimension also includes how electoral systems can have “indirect influence on the workings of the federal system”.<sup>13</sup> Proportional and majoritarian electoral systems have different effects on the relationship between minority groups and the central state. Some argue that majoritarian systems are unable to protect distinct minorities but that it can aid in breaking down distinctive group identities whilst proportional systems can “provide incentives for political actors to reinforce their bonds with core homogenous groups of supporters”.<sup>14</sup> The perspective of institutional design is especially highlighted by the Lijphart-Horowitz debate on democracy and further on democracy in deeply divided societies. Horowitz’s ideal is a unitary state with a majoritarian system. Political parties shift in coalitions of voters and there is no exclusion of parts of society. The incentive to win votes allegedly puts pressure on political parties to moderate their appeals, compete for median voters, and minorities.<sup>15</sup> In deeply divided places, however, this is not the ideal according to Lijphart. Competitive democracy in these societies will not have the same effect of competition for median voters. Individuals will instead vote for ethnic political parties that represent their own identity. If a group constitutes a weak minority it could struggle in gaining political presence in the system, which could in turn lead to political fragmentation and potential secession.<sup>16</sup> Lijphart proposes a consociational model with power sharing and group autonomy. He also supports the idea of minority veto and proportionality. Especially important is the power sharing element in the executive and group autonomy over education and culture. The underlying logic is that the legislature under proportional representation creates “incentives for political leaders to cooperate across ethnic lines.”<sup>17</sup> Horowitz criticizes

---

<sup>12</sup> Tierney, 2008. “Giving with one hand: Scottish devolution within a unitary state”. p. 446

<sup>13</sup> Erk & Anderson, 2010. p. 7

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 7

<sup>15</sup> Choudhry, 2008. “Bridging comparative politics and comparative constitutional law: Constitutional design in divided societies”. p. 15-17

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 17-18

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 19

Lijphart's model and argues that it does not offer an explanation to why there is an incentive for leaders of the majority ethnic group to agree to power sharing arrangements in the first place. Horowitz himself, however, cannot explain why leaders after conflict should accept his institutional proposals, whereas Lijphart suggests that elites may engage in accommodative behavior if they believe it is necessary to avoid war. Unfortunately, I do not have space to summarize the entire debate, but it is a pinnacle of the perspective and has led to more research.

### 2.1.3 Economic factors

The last dimension is broad and incorporates economic and social factors. Economic variation between regions and ethnic groups can lead to increased popular support for independence, especially if the subunit is economically advantageous or disadvantageous. The distribution of natural resources has also been presented as an important economic factor when discussing potential secession. If a region is economically superior it may feel exploited by the state. If it is economically worse off it may feel that separation could increase economic growth and can follow its own policy preferences.<sup>18</sup> It is rare that ethnic, national or linguistic issues and conflicts are not also related to economic factors at some level. Economists and other scholars have examined border efficiency, maximization of differences between total benefits and total costs, the trade-off between heterogeneity and the scale of economics in large states and economic globalization in relation to secession.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Erk & Anderson, 2010. p. 7-8

<sup>19</sup> Erni, 2014. "The economic of secession: theory and empirics". p. 4, 58-60

## 2.2 Recognition in the research field

Recognition of sub-state entities has mostly been studied in relation to international recognition and foreign policy. One prominent example is Ker-Lindsay's book on foreign policy and countering secessionism.<sup>20</sup> He primarily and thoroughly examines strategies for preventing international recognition available to and exercised by central states. Strategies are for instance public diplomacy, anti-legitimization campaigns and open opposition.<sup>21</sup>

The primary inspirational work for this essay, however, is Tierney's chapter about Scottish devolution in *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation?* in which he briefly discusses symbolic recognition, its effects and the issue of relying on "the traditional rhetoric of decentralization and the concomitant assumption that we can map this taxonomical construction neatly onto models of plurinational realignment."<sup>22</sup> My study builds on his discussion and proposes a more narrow hypothesis with rejection of desired symbolic recognition in focus.

An issue with recognition is the difficulty to isolate its effects in relation to other possible explaining variables. Doing large scale interviews with the aim to evaluate the effects through surveys would be expensive and was not achievable for this essay.

---

<sup>20</sup> Ker-Lindsay, 2012. *The Foreign Policy of Counter Secession: Preventing the Recognition of Contested States*

<sup>21</sup> Coggins, 2014, "Ker-Lindsay, J. (2012). The Foreign Policy of Counter Secession: Preventing the Recognition of Contested States". p. 190

<sup>22</sup> Tierney, 2008. p. 447-451. Citation on p. 448

## 4. Theoretical hypothesis

When analyzing differences in constitutional arrangements and their effects as conflict regulators, political scientists have created typologies for these institutions. In creating accurate typologies, it is then possible to proceed to identify characteristics and trends relevant to the nature of the different systems. There seems to be no simple ideal form of federal or power sharing system that can constructively deal with divisions in divided societies. Different systems have attempted to solve the issue of distinct diversity with combinations of autonomous self-rule for groups and consolidated shared rule in other political matters.

Recognition is an aspect that needs to be taken into consideration both when understanding these systems as conflict regulators and when comparing their secession-inducing and secession-preventing features. Recognition of sub-state minorities by the central state relates to the second definition and to parts of the third definition of "recognition" found in the Oxford English Dictionary: "acknowledgement of the existence or validity of something; and affirmation or appreciation of one's achievements or rights."<sup>23</sup> Recognition could be understood as the acknowledgement of the existence and validity of the differences in nationality, ethnicity, culture and religion, as well as the affirmation of their rights to have authority (or some form of it) over themselves. Recognition is theorized to be important on the basis: "to be 'recognised' by someone as something is critical for gaining a sense of selfhood, constituting us as a unique individual subject"<sup>24</sup> In this case the uniqueness is related to the minority group, not individuals.

Symbolic recognition in this context is acknowledgement and affirmation by the central state that has no obvious legal bearing, which refers to claims on differences in nationality, culture and languages among minority groups. It is merely recognition that manifests in self-identity for a minority group's definition in legal texts. In addition, it entails constitutional interpretations and asymmetries in the division of political and legal authority among geographical groups, differentiating the legitimacy of their claims to self-rule within a state.

---

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Busbridge, 2018. *Multicultural Politics of Recognition and Postcolonial Citizenship*. p. 51

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 50

Arguably any form of federal system or devolution settlement that is based on ethnic, national, linguistic or cultural differences is a recognition of that minority's rights to some sort of territorial autonomy. Comparing the quasi-federal system in Spain with the devolution settlements in the United Kingdom (hereafter UK), it is obvious that the autonomous regions in Spain enjoy higher levels of political autonomy. They enjoy more stable political and judicial powers in addition to the fact that the power is not devolved from the central state in the same way as in the case of the regions in the UK. The UK is however more accommodating on symbolic issues than Spain, making their differences more complicated to grasp. Only analyzing sub-state entities through the political and legal powers that they enjoy is insufficient. Symbolic recognition also plays a meaningful role when comparing accommodation and integration in relation to plurinational alignment, as suggested by Tierney.<sup>25</sup>

Important for the aspect of symbolic recognition is the competing definitions and concepts of "nation", "nationality" and "historic rights". For some people nationality is essential and the basis for the state system where they should enjoy sovereignty within its territorial border. For some, the aspiration to have their nationality recognized might be satisfied with regional autonomy. For others, nationality is merely a cultural association, subordinated to individual identity.

The precise definitions of the term nation is in itself a debated issue, with differentiating definitions both within political science and in the common language. Nation is sometimes confused with state or country, even in political science textbooks. It is sometimes used synonymously to "ethnic group". In the literature we find definitions emphasizing territoriality, mass public culture, legal rights and common myths. Others are more related to ethnic groups emphasizing "feelings of fraternity, substantial distinctiveness, as well as beliefs in a common ancestry and continuous genealogy".<sup>26</sup> In addition, more general definitions relate to "people organized around the idea of self-determination" or "socially mobilized body of individuals, believing themselves to be united by some set of characteristics that differentiate them (in their own minds) from outsiders, striving to create or maintain their own state".<sup>27</sup> A nation is obviously a collective group of people but how can they be distinguished from other groups in society? Barrington offers an answer by emphasizing the importance of the "belief in the right to territorial self-determination". He states that "nation are

---

<sup>25</sup> Tierney, 2008. p. 451

<sup>26</sup> Barrington, 1997. "'Nation' and 'Nationalism': The Misuse of Key Concepts in Political Science". p. 712

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 712

groups of people linked by unifying traits and the desire to control a territory that is thought of as the group's national homeland. The belief in the right to territorial control is central to distinguish nation from other collectives."<sup>28</sup>

Symbolic recognition is relevant to the understanding of power sharing systems. Acknowledgement of differences can be important for (1) groups and citizens' sense of inclusion in the system, (2) the self-confidence in their national identity and (3) implications for the interpretation of constitutional arrangements.<sup>29</sup>

The effects of expanding or shrinking recognition is in itself a paradox. Increasing symbolic recognition could increase the sense of separateness in the state which could give incentives and lead to mobilization for nationalist or separatist ideas. It could in principle also encourage the minority to live with the offered accommodation, leading citizens and political leaders to regard themselves as part of a union, and to be satisfied with dual or complementary identities. Symbolic recognition can therefore theoretically have both secession-inducing and/or secession-preventing features, affecting the will to secede in different ways.

My main contribution to the issue of recognition is to suggest that denying symbolic recognition could work as a secession-inducing mechanism in the short-term. Rejection of desired symbolic recognition by the central state could work as a trigger mechanism for mobilization for independence in a sub-state entity. Rejecting the entity's desire to be defined as a nation or nationality, their desire to have their regional languages above or on equal terms with the national language in institutions, and their desire to rename institutions, could be used as a mobilizing tool for secessionist agendas, affecting the will to secede in the short-term.

The theoretical hypothesis of this study is:

- Rejection of symbolic recognition by the central state is a trigger mechanism with secession-inducing effects in the short-term.

Symbolic recognition of a sub-state group has meaningful but less salient relevance for understanding different power sharing systems. The recognition of nations, nationalities or ethnic

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 713

<sup>29</sup> Tierney, 2008. p. 450-451

groups within the state can have effects on how individuals in the system perceive themselves and how actors and citizens interpret the constitutional arrangement. Recognition is obviously not equivalent to the constitutional powers that are present in these sort of systems but it is nevertheless an aspect that should be taken into consideration when doing comparisons.

The case-study comparison section will empirically explore one aspect of recognition in two cases (Catalonia and Galicia in Spain) with different outcomes on the will to secede and tries to identify tendencies among them. I do not propose that symbolic recognition is the sole explanatory factor in accounting for whether a sub-state entity will pursue independence or not, I merely suggest that it plays an important role for the understanding of the constitutional arrangement and its purposes in addition to being able to have secession-inducing effects when rejected. I compare aspects of symbolic recognition with the constitutional arrangement being used in one case where there has been major political movements for independence (Catalonia) and for one case where there has not (yet) developed such extensive movements (Galicia).

# 5. Research design

## 5.1 Most-similar case-study

This study utilizes Mill's "Method of Difference" (in more recent methodology books this case-selection technique is called most-similar). The method builds on the logic that if an effect, cause or condition is to be examined, the researcher needs to examine both the occurrence of the phenomenon and the non-occurrence of that same phenomenon. Then, through elimination, scientists can discover when and how they differ. He illustrates the logic in his second canon:

"If an instance in which the phenomenon under investigation occurs, and an instance in which it does not occur, have every circumstance in common save one, that one occurring only in the former; the circumstance in which alone the two instances differ, is the effect, or the cause, or an indispensable part of the cause, of the phenomenon."<sup>30</sup>

This method is preferable to his other "Method of Agreement" since it includes analysis of cases where the phenomenon did not happen as a reference. I use most-similar design in order to give insight into the relevance or non-relevance of symbolic recognition of a sub-unit entity by a central state when trying to determine secession-inducing features of power sharing institutions in relation to ethnic, national, linguistic or cultural diversity. When using the most-similar design, cases should aim to be similar on as many specified variables as possible. The method is mostly used in hypothesis-generating studies such as this one, with differences of outcomes (in this case independence referendum) and similarities on other related variables that could constitute to the outcome. The logic is to hold other explaining variables constant. I face the methodological difficulty of identifying *the* causal mechanism, as is not rare in comparative politics.<sup>31</sup>

This study does not aim to explain secession-inducement with symbolic recognition as a universal or even singular casual effect, following Popper's logic: "If  $p$  then  $q$ ,  $p$ , therefore  $q$ " and "If  $p$  then  $q$ , not  $q$ , then not  $p$ ".<sup>32</sup> It merely aims to explore a possible causal relationship between rejection of symbolic recognition and secession-inducement. It does aim to test the hypothesis mentioned in the

---

<sup>30</sup> Mill, 1882. *A System Of Logic, Ratiocinative And Inductive*. p. 483

<sup>31</sup> Gerring, 2007. *Case Study Research*. p. 4, 131, 133

<sup>32</sup> Popper, 1959. *The Logic of scientific discovery*. p. 54-56



theory section but does not (yet) have generalizing ambitions. Secession-inducement in regard to these sorts of cases is always multifactorial and it is often impossible to strictly isolate one specific variable.

## 5.2 Research cases

The units of research are sub-state entities with ethnic, national, linguistic or cultural demands in relation to a state. The sub-state entities enjoy some different but related forms of autonomy in the political system, differentiating the units from other decentralized regions both by their ethnic and/or national disparity.

I compare two sub-state entities with ethnic, national, linguistic or cultural demands in Spain, an established democratic country. One sub-state entity has attempted to gain independence through referendum and one has not (yet) done so. The study excludes cases that could be explained by theories on when secession-referendums are held, such as cases "following the lifting of a long-standing imperial hegemony".<sup>33</sup> I study one of the outliers of that identified trend. This means that cases related to the fall of colonialism, communism and civil/ethnic wars are not relevant for the theory. The cases for this initial study of rejection of recognition as a secession-inducing element in constitutional design are Galicia and Catalonia within Spain. These cases were chosen on the basis that they are similar to each other on many variables. In examining sub-state entities in one country, I keep the level of democracy constant in order to limit other explaining factors for secession-inducement and secession-prevention. We can for the most part exclude systematic oppression and armed conflicts when limiting the cases to democratic states. The electoral system is kept constant in relation to the Lijphart-Horowitz debate. Economic factors cannot be fully excluded as explanatory variables since the cases differ in regard to economic development such as regional GDP in relation to country GDP. This has most likely had an effect on secessionism for the cases in the long term.

Symbolic recognition is operationalized as; (1) how the sub-state entity is defined in legal texts that have no obvious bearing on legal powers, (2) how multiple available interpretations of the constitutional arrangement, taking form in the asymmetry or symmetry of self-government in

---

<sup>33</sup> Qvortrup, 2014. *Referendums and Ethnic Conflict*. p. 6

relation to other regional groups, alter perceived legitimacy of claims related to autonomy or self-determination.

**Table 1: Constant and dependent variables**

<b>Factors / Cases</b>	<b>Catalonia</b>	<b>Galicia</b>
<b>Fall of longstanding hegemonic power</b>	No	No
<b>Democracy</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>National electoral system for lower house</b>	Proportional representation	Proportional representation
<b>Regional electoral system</b>	Proportional representation	Proportional representation
<b>Right to self-determination</b>	No	No
<b>GDP growth in percent 2017</b>	3,3 %	3,1 %
<b>Annual GDP in relation to the central state 2016</b>	17,8 %	4,9 %
<b>GDP per capita 2016</b>	31 523\$	23 675\$
<b>Independence referendum</b>	Yes	No

Data from: Freedom House, 2018, [countryeconomy.com](http://countryeconomy.com)

### 5.3 Data

The study relies on secondary data from government sponsored institutions, constitutional and legal texts and previous case studies on (1) the historical narrative of recognition for the sub-state entity in focus, (2) how the sub-state entity is formally recognized within the constitution and laws of the state, (3) the relation of the sub-state entity to other entities that are also present within the same state, (4) political events related to the symbolic recognition of the sub-state entity and other minor signs of recognition.

Changes in citizens' references on independence is primarily measured by changes in the number of seats of separatist nationalist parties in the regional parliaments. This is an apparent drawback of the study. Having consistent data on the actual preferences by citizens over time would be preferable since changes could be pinpointed more accurately. The preferences on independence in Catalonia is measured by *Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió*. I have taken an average of their quarterly polls since

2006 and excluded data from the months before the independence referendum in 2017 on the basis of the volatility of preferences in that time period. The economic differences relies on data from [countryeconomy.com](http://countryeconomy.com), which are less reliable, but sufficient for easier comparisons. They use sources such as IMF, Eurostat and the World Bank. Surveys on national identity are conducted by *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas*. Their sample size is rather small (around 500 citizens for surveys in Galicia and around 1000 for surveys in Catalonia). The data is not completely reliable and should rather be seen as an approximation of national identity.

## 6. Case-study comparison

The creation of the Spanish state started early in the Christian re-conquest of the peninsula around the year 1000. In the medieval age Spain was divided into three kingdoms (Castile, Aragon and Navarre<sup>34</sup>), with the Castilian crown being the main political powerhouse. The earliest parliaments were established in Leon, Castile, Aragon and Navarre. The Kingdom of Aragon encompassed Aragon, Valencia, the Balearic Islands and Catalonia with federal elements of autonomy. Spain became an influential state, although internally representing different kingdoms and principalities, in the fifteenth century rivaling other large states such as Portugal, France, England and Scotland.<sup>35</sup> Some historians argue that the modern Spanish nation "was formed and steeled during" Spain's War of Independence against Napoleon with the introduction of the Statue of Bayonne in 1808 and the Cádiz Constitution in 1812.<sup>36</sup>

Another prominent part in the Spanish history is the dictatorships of Primo de Rivera between 1923 and 1930 and Franco between 1939 and 1975. Historians disagree on the relationships between the dictators and the minority communities within the country. Some state that Franco for instance used special repression in Catalonia and the Basque region on ethnic and linguistic grounds. While others hold the view that the dictators were more opposed to general ideas of republicanism, regional autonomism and separatism, not specifically the diversity of communities within the country. Interestingly Franco repressed all languages (Catalan, Basque and Gallego) except the national Spanish, "this in spite of Franco himself being of Galician origin".<sup>37</sup>

Keating highlights several constitutional traditions and approaches in Spain with regard to nationhood and nationalism. One is a centralist tradition emphasizing a unitary nation of Spain with no internal adversaries recognized, a mostly conservative approach. This approach was actualized by the Franco regime, with strong imperialist and traditionalist tendencies. The approach has been continued, to a much more moderate degree, by the Popular Party (PP) both on national and regional level. In the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia there are numerous other

---

<sup>34</sup> Keating, 2008. "Rival nationalism in a plurinational state: Spain, Catalonia, and the Basque Country" p. 318

<sup>35</sup> Tortella, 2017. *Catalonia in Spain: History and Myth*. p. 26

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p. 81

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 146

interpretations of the constitutional arrangement, some advocating sovereignty for the stateless nations and some with views more aligned with federalism.<sup>38</sup>

The change in political structure of the Spanish state started at the end of the 1970s, after the death of Franco. The state made two large political transitions: from authoritarianism to democracy and from centralism to decentralization. The Spanish Constitution, established in 1978, represents the settlement between two important political forces present at the time, the "unity of the Spanish Nation" and the "autonomy of the nationalities and regions of which it is composed".<sup>39</sup> The terms used in the constitution in regard to the contrast of "nationalities" and "regions" made it possible for the system to encompass different levels of autonomy as well as recognition. The Basques and Catalans initially refused to have an institutional status comparable with the other regions. The year after the constitution was established "an uncontrolled race for accessing autonomy"<sup>40</sup> took shape, giving strong incentives for sub-national elites to engage in negotiations over autonomy in their regions. This is largely associated with the lack of consensus over the conditions and speed of which the autonomy process was implemented. This resulted in the heterogeneous structure of the autonomy system in Spain in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s. There are three territories with recognized ethnic or cultural differences, namely Galicia, Catalonia and the Basque Country, 'the historic nationalities'. In addition there are multiple historic regions, the largest are Andalusia, Valencia, Canary Islands, Aragon and Balearic Islands. The rest of the country is divided into two groups, macro-regions such as Castile and Leon and Castile-La Mancha, and regionalized provinces like Madrid, and Murcia. All in all the country is made up of seventeen autonomous communities, each with their own statute, creating a diverse and complicated system with differentiating features of autonomy institutions. The autonomy statutes are "organic laws" that requires a reinforced majority in the autonomous parliaments to be edited.<sup>41</sup> The delegation of political and judicial powers of autonomy should not be seen as an event, rather a process. The model for gaining autonomy was initially divided into two approaches. The fast-track approach was supposed to be applied to the three recognized nationalities mentioned above, however the Navarre and Andalusia also joined the approach. Navarre did so on the basis of "the constitutional recognition of its 'historic' privileges" and Andalusia because there was a strong will to join the group, declared in a

---

<sup>38</sup> Keating, 2008. p. 319

<sup>39</sup> Spanish Constitution. 1978. p. 10

<sup>40</sup> Morata, Francesc, 2013. "Spain: the autonomic state. p. 274

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 275

referendum.<sup>42</sup> The slow-track approach gave limited autonomy with the clause to negotiate over more powers after five years.

The unexpected expansion of the autonomy process, in light of article 143 in the constitution, is relevant to the discussion of symbolic recognition.<sup>43</sup> Slow-track regions were able to transfer to the other approach. This was primarily contested by nationalists in the Basque Country but was acquiesced by the leading Catalan nationalists in the drafting of the constitution.<sup>44</sup> Navarre gained similar autonomous status as Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia but not the same symbolic recognition as a "nationality". This is important for the interpretations of the constitution and the asymmetries in the system. Navarre and especially the Basque Country enjoy more special arrangements of tax-varying freedom than other regions.<sup>45</sup> During the initial negotiations and later renegotiations of the autonomy process in Spain, most regions became symmetrical in power distribution.<sup>46</sup> This devalued the special statuses of regions such as the Basque country, Catalonia and Galicia that were initially supposed to enjoy wider autonomy permitted by the Second Transitional Disposition in the Spanish Constitution.<sup>47</sup> Even further when some regions that are not "nationalities" enjoy stronger tax-varying powers than Galicia and Catalonia.

The vagueness of the Constitution has had implications for the symbolic recognition of Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country. Even though autonomy has increased for all autonomous regions in the country since their first statutes, the original "nationalities" enjoy very much comparable autonomy to other regions. The Constitution granted two different interpretations of the autonomy process. One view recognized differences between regions and nationalities with strong asymmetries as well as historic rights. The other insists on the unity of Spain as a nation, with no formal asymmetries (with the exception of the Basques' economic rights) and no legal status for different "nationalities". The Constitutional Court with its presumed power of constitutional review regulates the power distribution between the central state and the autonomous regions. Either level

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 274-275

<sup>43</sup> *Spanish Constitution*, 1978. Article 143

<sup>44</sup> Keating, 2008. p. 329

<sup>45</sup> Morata, Francesc. 2013. p. 278

<sup>46</sup> Viver, 2013. "The Distribution of Competences in Spain a Year After the Ruling 31/2010 of the Constitutional Court: The Reaffirmation of the *Unitary State*?" p. 454

<sup>47</sup> *Spanish Constitution*, 1978. Article 151.

of governments can file complaints and have laws reviewed. In actual terms, the court has received fewer complaints in the 2000s and onwards, with issues being solved more often through negotiations.<sup>48</sup>

The political powers of the autonomic institutions are generally distributed on three different levels (with some discrepancies for different regions):

- 1) Powers exclusive to the autonomous communities such as education, culture, institutional organization, territorial organization, health and a few others.
- 2) Shared powers such as industry, agriculture, economic development and planning and more.<sup>49</sup>
- 3) Powers reserved to the central state such as monetary system, foreign trade, defense and international relations and more.<sup>50</sup>

## 6.1 Catalonia

Catalonia has been a part of Spain and before that Aragon since early medieval times. It has enjoyed some autonomous features throughout history, most recently a parliament was briefly established between 1932 and 1939 and before the Principality of Catalonia existed; terminated at the end of the War on Spanish Succession in 1714.<sup>51</sup> Catalonia was defined as a "nationality" differentiating it from most other regions after the Spanish Constitution was introduced. It was, as mentioned earlier, part of the fast-track procedure to autonomy. The fact that regions that were not defined as "nationalities" were able to join the fast-track group devalued from the symbolic recognition of the original group as different from other regions.

Historians generally hold the view that Catalan nationalism grew as a consequence of linguistic and economic differences, specially in the 20th century.<sup>52</sup> The region has had a substantial presence of nationalist parties in the Parliament of Catalonia since the 1980s. The main player being the Convergence and Union (CiU) coalition that has even enjoyed spells of influence as external supporters of coalition in Madrid. The CiU has been a central and moderate political player in the

---

<sup>48</sup> Keating, 2008. p. 330

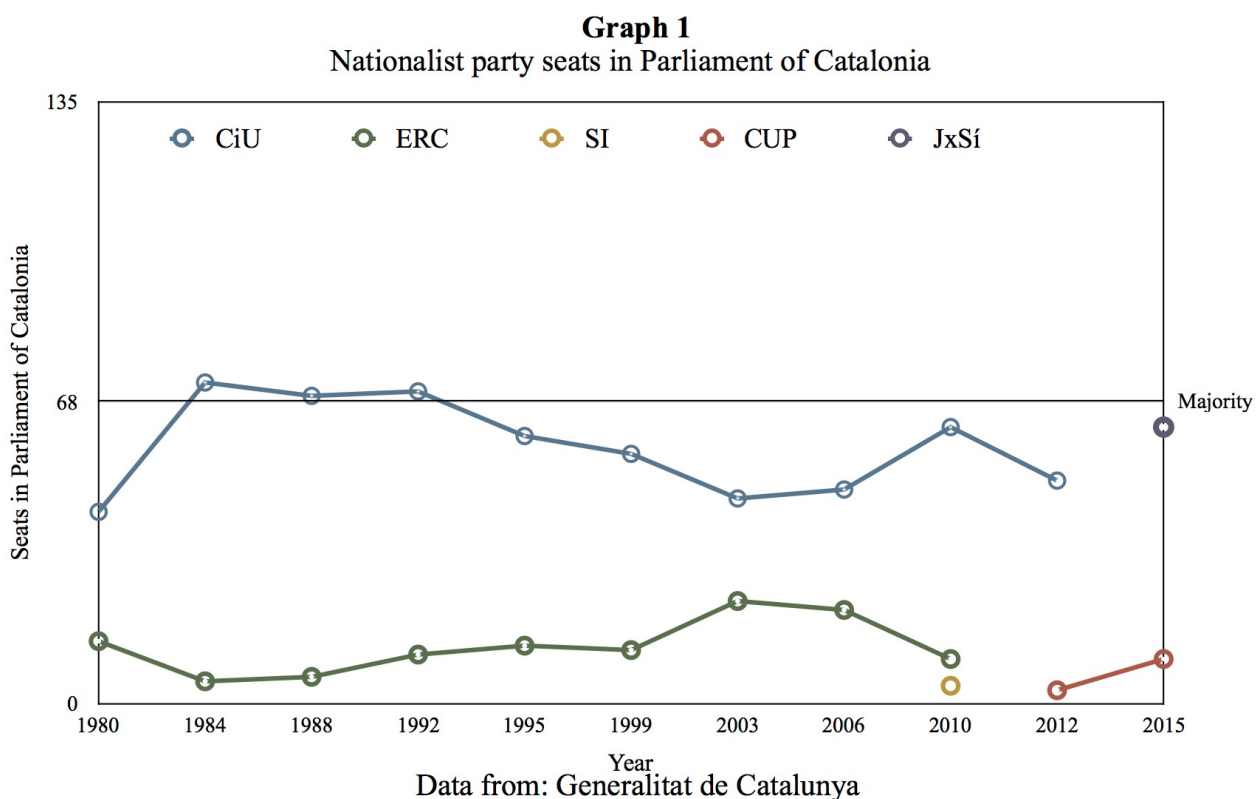
<sup>49</sup> Losada, 1999. "National identity and self-government in Spain: The Galician Case". p. 142

<sup>50</sup> European Committee of the Regions, 2012 "Division of Powers".

<sup>51</sup> Tortella, 2017. p. 281

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 289

region with demands on greater autonomy, especially economic. They lost significant influence from 2004 to 2010. The coalition of socialists, the left-wing nationalist Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) and the Initiative for Catalonia Greens (IC) formed a minority government in 2004. The CiU later regained influence as one of the main contributors to the symbolic controversy triggered by the new Statute of Autonomy in 2006. This was an unexpected and significant move from the moderates who had not previously put their emphasis on historic rights, symbolic discourse, and the right to self-determination. It can be seen as a strategy to outmaneuver the more nationalist ERC.<sup>53</sup> We clearly see the effects of the strategy in the decline of ERC's seats in the following election. The Together for Yes (JxSí) in the graph below is the coalition of CiU, ERC and a few other minor secessionist parties.<sup>54</sup>



The Spanish Constitution recognizes differences in nationality. Interestingly enough, it does not recognize the proposition that Spain is a union made up of multiple nations, merely a state of autonomies. This became an apparent issue when the Spanish Constitutional Court decided over the new Catalan Statute of Autonomy in 2010. The Statute was introduced in 2006 and voted on both in

<sup>53</sup> Keating, 2008. p. 331, 334, 338

<sup>54</sup> Levrat et al. 2017. "Catalonia's Legitimate Right to Decide". p. 24



the autonomous parliament and endorsed by referendum in Catalonia. The Statute recognized "Catalonia as a nation".<sup>55</sup> It took four years for the constitutional court to make its decision on the 223 articles in the Statute. The courts struck down the attempt to enhance the role of the Catalan language, and Catalonia's status as a "nation", arguing that this has "no interpretive legal effect".<sup>56</sup> Then one might wonder, why not recognize Catalonia as a nation if it has no legal relevance? This is most likely related to the definition of nationhood discussed in the theory section. We have seen similar requests in other countries with autonomous regions, most notably the debate in Canada in 2006 over Québécois nationhood. The discussion resulted in a motion that symbolically recognized that the "Québécois form a nation within a united Canada.", the original motion from the nationalist party Bloc Québécois excluding the words "within a united Canada".<sup>57</sup> In relation to the definitions it is easy to understand why there has been some hesitancy in the use of the term nation for sub-state groups that are ethnically, nationally, linguistically or culturally different from the state-bearing group (*staatsvolk* in German) within states. Since the courts ruling, the National Day of Catalonia has become a day of protest where thousands move to the streets every year to demand a new revised Statute.

After the rejection of the new Catalan Statute of Autonomy there was a strong identifiable change in the preferences for independence among the citizens. From 2006 to 2010 the "proportion of Catalans supporting the idea of an independent state" was around 20 percent. After 2010, the figures increased tremendously, from less than 20 percent in early 2010 to almost 50 percent in 2013. The trend later stagnated and the percentage of the population in favor of independence decreased to around 40 percent in the following years. The direct effect in the months after the rejection is an increase of 6 percent, from 19.4 percent at the start of 2010 to 25.2 percent at the end of the year.<sup>58</sup> This is an indication supporting the hypothesis that rejection of desired symbolic recognition can have secession-inducing effects in the short term. These empirical results are strengthened by increases in nationalistic interpretations of the organization of the Spanish state by Catalans, from 20.7 percent in 2005 regarding Spain to be "a state in which autonomies were recognized the

---

<sup>55</sup> *Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia*. 2006. p. 12

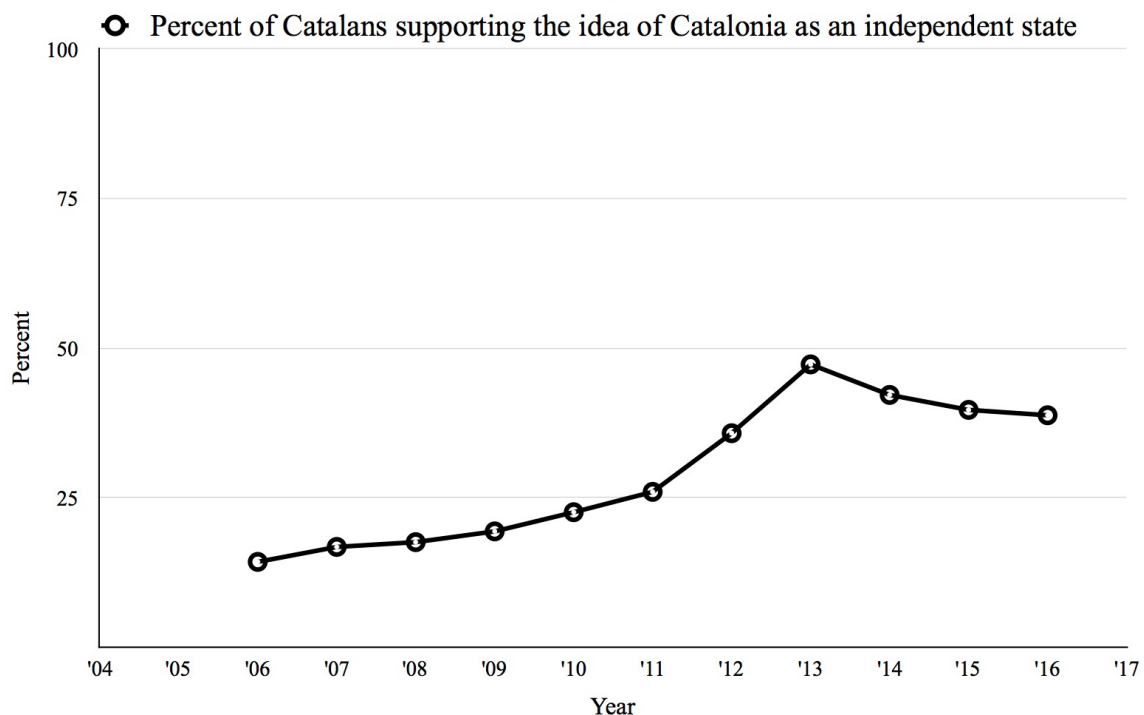
<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* p. 66

<sup>57</sup> Bloc Québécois, 2006. "Grâce au Bloc Québécois, le Canada devient le premier pays à reconnaître officiellement la nation québécoise"

<sup>58</sup> Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2016. "Enquesta sobre context polític a Catalunya. 2016". p. 40

possibility of becoming independent nations” (unofficial translation) to 37.4 percent in 2012.<sup>59</sup> The Spanish president Mariano Rajoy rejected the idea that Spain is a ”plurinational” state in June 2017. He argued that defining it as such is unclear and his political party does not discuss the issue of self-determination.<sup>60</sup> Only four months after the rejection of Catalonia as a ”nation” and Spain as a ”plurinational” state by the president, the regional government decided to hold an unconstitutional independence referendum. This fact also supports the proposition that rejection of symbolic recognition could function as a trigger mechanism for secessionist agendas.

**Graph 2**



Data from: Centre d’Estudis d’Opinió, 2016

In 1985, 9 percent of Catalan citizens considered themselves only Catalan, 24 percent considered themselves more Catalan than Spanish and 47 percent as much Spanish as Catalan.<sup>61</sup> In 1996, 11 percent considered themselves only Catalan, 25.7 percent more Catalan than Spanish and 36.5 percent as much Spanish as Catalan.<sup>62</sup> In 2012, 21.9 percent considered themselves only Catalan,

<sup>59</sup> Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2005. Survey 2610. ”Barómetro Autonómico I”. Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2012. Survey 2956. ”Barómetro Autonómico III”. p. 10

<sup>60</sup> *Catalan News*, ”Rajoy rejects defining Spain as ’plurinational’”

<sup>61</sup> Moreno, 1988. ”Scotland and Catalonia: The Path to Home Rule”. p. 172

<sup>62</sup> Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1996. Survey 2228. ”Conciencia Nacional Y Regional”

29.2 percent more Catalan than Spanish and 34.3 percent as much Spanish as Catalan.<sup>63</sup> The national identity of Catalans seems to have changed substantially since the autonomy process began.

The unconstitutional referendum on independence held in October 2017 in Catalonia resulted in 90.2 percent for "Yes" and 7.8 percent for "No" with a turnout of 43 percent.<sup>64</sup> The aftermaths as of writing this thesis still indeterminate. The initial steps of the central government was to utilize article 155 of the Constitution, allowing for control over a region's autonomy if its government "acts in a way that is seriously prejudicial to the general interest of Spain".<sup>65</sup> I will not speculate on whether secession seems realistic at the moment. It is noteworthy that the nationalist leader Carles Puigdemont fled the country, that some regional MP's face prison and that the nationalist parties won the snap election held in May 2018 by one seat in the regional parliament.<sup>66</sup>

## 6.2 Galicia

Galicia has been a less apparent case when discussing independence and accommodation through power sharing institutions. Galicia has large differences in linguistic and ethnic terms from the central state. This fact might typically facilitate nationalism, but interestingly enough these differences are also apparent within the region. Culture, customs, traditions and economic strategies has been diverse within the region in the last 200 years. Before the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime nationalism had been on rise in the region, but its rural economic and societal status in addition to low levels of political development, made the process less apparent than in other comparable regions such as Catalonia and the Basque Country.<sup>67</sup>

Galicia, like Catalonia, proposed a Statute of Autonomy in the 1930s that was never implemented. When Franco gained power the central state repressed the regional language and most importantly the leftist nationalist parties which were prominent in the region.<sup>68</sup> The Galician nationalism was able to survive primarily as a cultural legacy with some organizations focusing on the survival of

---

<sup>63</sup> Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2012. Survey 2956. "Barómetro Autonómico III". p. 26

<sup>64</sup> Government of Catalonia, 2017

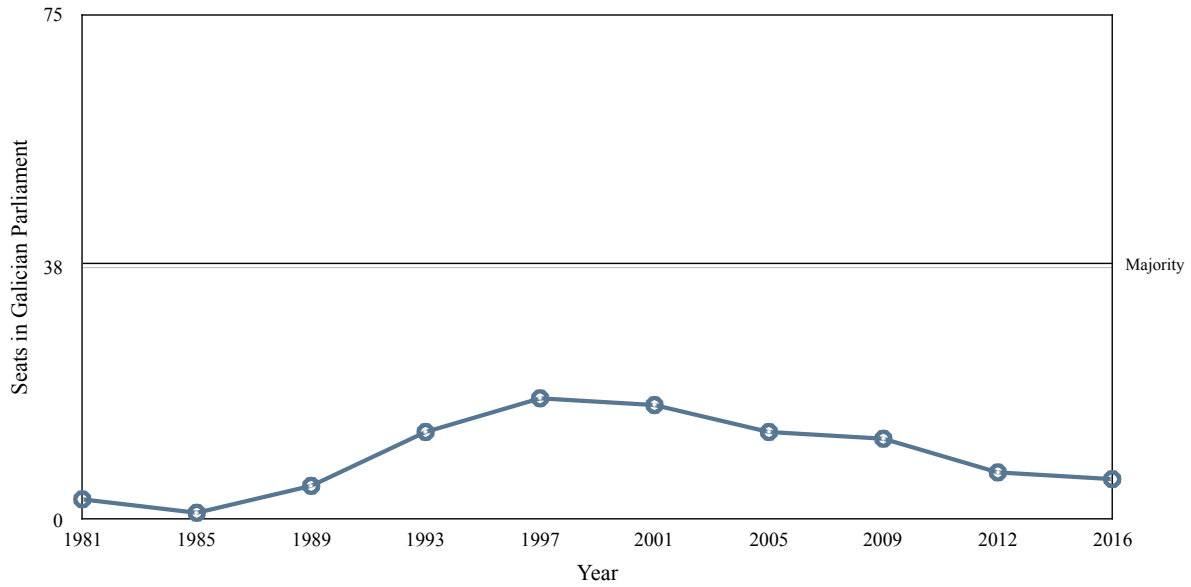
<sup>65</sup> *Spanish Constitution*, 1978. Article 155

<sup>66</sup> Burgen, 2018. "Catalonia's parliament elects hardline secessionist as president". *The Guardian*.

<sup>67</sup> Núñez, 1997. "National reawakening within a changing society: The Galician movement in Spain (1960-97)". p. 32

<sup>68</sup> Losada, 1999. p. 152-153

**Graph 3**  
BGN seats in Galician Parliament



Data from: Generalitat Valencia

the regional language. The Galician Statute of Autonomy was introduced as part of the fast-track group in 1981 and had features similar to that of the Catalan Statute, with the widening of the autonomy process to disregard the distinctness of the nationalistic claims for autonomy in Galicia as well. The nationalists in the region, consisting of leftist and communist parties such as Galician People's Union (UPG) and *Partido Socialista Gelego* (PSG) initially rejected the Spanish Constitution of 1978 and the statute of autonomy because it did not satisfy their claims for self-determination and economic measures made available to the Galician government.<sup>69</sup>

Some political scientists point towards "the disappearance of moderate nationalist parties" and the low levels of political participation as contributing factors to the relative weakness of Galician nationalism on the parliamentary level.<sup>70</sup> However, nationalism in the region has been apparent in other respects. For instance, 17.5 percent of Galicia's labour representatives were part of nationalist trade-unions as early as 1980.<sup>71</sup> Arguably, the accommodation of regional differences and the normalization of the Galician language in institutions by regionalized Spanish parties weakened the strictly nationalist parties apparent in similar regions. Spanish parties such as the PP were the

<sup>69</sup> Núñez, 1997. p. 32, 35

<sup>70</sup> Losada, 1999. p. 155

<sup>71</sup> Núñez, 1997. p. 38

dominant political force in the 1980s and 1990s and one of the main opponents of non-Spanish nationalism, however they became more regionalist, advocating further autonomy for the region, satisfying non-secessionist nationalism in the region. The nationalist party *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* (BGN) first started gaining a position in the autonomous region in the election of 1993 and has pursued the issue of self-determination.<sup>72</sup> The party had a far left-wing ideological perspective on the Galician society, supporting the proposition that Galicia is a Spanish colony and advocating broader social services as well as elimination of social inequalities.<sup>73</sup>

The contemporary status of the nationalists in the region is still left-wing but they have made efforts to moderate their platform, which resulted in internal fragmentation in 2009, that subsequently resulted in losses of support in 2012. Political scientists have pointed towards the increased presence of Galician nationalism amongst the young and on the internet but this does not seem to have led to increased support in parliamentary elections.<sup>74</sup>

In 1996, when the BGN was at a higher level of political influence, the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* conducted a survey showing that 7 percent of Galician citizens felt only Galician, 35.7 percent felt more Galician than Spanish, 43.7 percent felt as Spanish as Galician.<sup>75</sup> In 2012 they did another survey where 2.3 percent felt only Galician, 21.7 percent more Galician than Spanish and 69.9 percent just as Spanish as Galician.<sup>76</sup> The decrease of the group feeling more Galician than Spanish is interesting both because it suggests the fluidity of national identity and the weakness of nationalists in the Parliament of Galicia. However in 1996 that group was actually 10 percent higher than the respective group in Catalonia, hinting at similarities in national identity at that time.

---

<sup>72</sup> Losada, 1999. p. 143-144

<sup>73</sup> Núñez, 1997. p. 49

<sup>74</sup> Warf & Ferras, 2015. "Nationalism, identity and landscape in contemporary Galicia". p. 265

<sup>75</sup> Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1996. Survey 2228. "Conciencia Nacional Y Regional"

<sup>76</sup> Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2012. Survey 2956. "Barómetro Autonómico III". p. 23

## 6.3 Comparative discussion

The multiple interpretations of the Spanish Constitution and the ambiguity of the autonomy process has led to some ethnic and nationality-based tensions, most notably the Catalan independence referendum. However they seem to have been reasonably well managed, not leading to armed conflicts or systematic repression from the central state in the two observed cases.

The national identity in the regions were at similar levels in the 1990s, as suggested by the polls presented. The secessionist sentiments in the regions between 2006 and 2009 are very much comparable. Roughly 20 percent in Catalonia and 17 percent in Galicia (votes for the secessionist BNG). However Catalan independence preferences and their most-preferred national identity has increased since 2010 after the rejection of the Statute of Autonomy. Equivalent rejection of symbolic recognition have not been apparent in Galicia, consequently supporting the hypothesis that the mechanism can fuel secessionist agendas. If the nationalists had made similar requests of symbolic recognition when they were influential (between 1997-2005) the mechanism could hypothetically have worked in the same way, increasing the sentiment for secession.

**Table 2: National identity in Catalonia and Galicia**

Region and year / National identity (in percent)	Catalonia 1985	Catalonia 1996	Galicia 1996	Catalonia 2012	Galicia 2012
Only Catalan/Galician	9 %	11 %	7 %	22 %	2 %
More Catalan/Galician than Spanish	24 %	26 %	36 %	29 %	22 %
Equally Catalan/Galician as Spanish	47 %	37 %	44 %	34 %	44 %
More Spanish than Catalan/Galician	7 %	12 %	8 %	7 %	2 %
Only Spanish	12 %	13 %	5 %	6 %	3 %

Data from: Moreno, 1988 and Centro de Investigacions Sociológicas, 1996, 2012

There are however factors that limit completely accurate comparison of preferences on secession in the regions. Firstly, the ideological position of nationalists, and the regionalization of Spanish-wide parties in Galicia are important aspects that differentiate the regions. Secondly, economic differences such as regional annual GDP in relation to national GDP most likely also effect the preferences with Catalonia contributing more and getting less back than Galicia. Materialistic explanations are however inadequate for explaining the incentives of moderate political leaders (CiU) to pursue independence with the aspiration to achieve greater economic development due to the unconstitutional nature of the referendum, with the leaders facing prison.

The increase in preferences for independence in Catalonia is the primary indicator of the theorized effect of rejecting desired symbolic recognition, with a six percent increase in the following months. The rejection of the Statue of Autonomy in 2010 was an essential benchmark in the growth of secessionist agendas in the region and when the CiU changed much of their sentiment on independence.

## 7. Concluding remarks

Symbolic recognition has not been widely taken into account when discussing institutional design in the research field. When comparing systems with the purpose to managing ethnic and/or national conflicts, analyses take their basis in the formal structure of sovereignty and political power. That means comparing systems on where they range on a scale from federalism to administrative decentralization, and in regard to their differences in secession-inducing and secession-preventing features. I argue that symbolic recognition should not be underestimated when doing comparisons, firstly on the theoretical ground that recognition can have both secession-inducing and/or secession-preventing effects, secondly because including symbolic recognition when comparing systems may alter the way a system is perceived in relation to accommodation and integration.

In the empirical section of this hypothesis-generating study there is support for the proposition that rejection of desired symbolic recognition could work as a trigger mechanism with secession-inducing features, in light of the increases in preferences for independence after the rejection of the new Catalan Statute of Autonomy, marking an important step on the road to independence for nationalists. The study aimed at keeping other explaining variables constant and succeed for the most part, however the ideological orientation and contribution to national GDP are two variable that could effect results. I would be cautious of stating that rejection of symbolic recognition has falsifiable effects on independence preferences.

In order to cement a more generalized role of symbolic recognition in relation to conflict regulation in these divided societies, scholars need to expand on Moreno's research on national identity in Scotland and Catalonia<sup>77</sup> and subsequent works. Researchers need to measure differences in national identity in a larger number of societies divided by ethnic, national, linguistic and cultural differences over time, in order to see if there is significant differences in national identity on the basis of recognition by the central state and in relation to demands for independence. Unfortunately, due to time and scope limitation, this study could not cement a more general causal relationship. It should rather be seen as an introductory essay on the relevance of symbolic recognition. To assure the role of rejection of symbolic recognition as a general trigger mechanism for mobilization for independence in the short-term, further studies of rejection of symbolic recognition need to be

---

<sup>77</sup> Moreno, 2006. "Scotland, Catalonia, Europeanization and the 'Moreno Question'"



studied in relevant cases (one example could be Québec). Ideally I would have liked to have the resources to code all the worlds' constitutions and statutes of democratic or democratizing states to see whether they embed recognition or deny it; to operationalize the coding in ways that distinguish such recognition from legal powers of autonomy or power-sharing; and to see what relationships exist between these variables (over time) and the strength of secessionist movements. But then I would be embarking upon a Masters or Doctoral dissertation.

# List of references

Barrington, W. Lowell, 1997. "'Nation' and 'Nationalism': The Misuse of Key Concepts in Political Science", *Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 30, No 4. p. 712-716.

Bloc Québécois, 2006. "Grâce au Bloc Québécois, le Canada devient le premier pays à reconnaître officiellement la nation québécoise" [Online at]: <https://www.blocquebecois.org/2006/11/grace-au-bloc-quebecois-le-canada-devient-le-premier-pays-a-reconnaitre-officiellement-la-nation-quebecoise/>. accessed 2018-05-05.

Burgen. "Catalonia's parliament elects hardline secessionist as president". *The Guardian*. 2018-05-14. [Online at]: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/14/catalonia-parliament-elects-hardline-nationalist-as-president>, accessed 2018-05-14.

Busbridge, Rachel, 2018. *Multicultural Politics of Recognition and Postcolonial Citizenship*. Oxon: Routledge.

*Catalan News*, "Rajoy rejects defining Spain as 'plurinational'", 2017-05-23. [Online at]: <http://www.catalannews.com/politics/item/rajoy-rejects-defining-spain-as-plurinational>, accessed 2018-04-20

[countryeconomy.com](http://countryeconomy.com), "Spain autonomous communities comparison: Spain vs Galicia." [Online at]: <https://countryeconomy.com/countries/spain-autonomous-communities/compare/spain/galicia>, accessed 2018-04-20.

Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2016. "Enquesta sobre context polític a Catalunya. 2016".

Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1996. Survey 2228. "Conciencia Nacional Y Regional"

Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2005. Survey 2610. "Barómetro Autonómico I".

Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2012. Survey 2956. "Barómetro Autonómico III"

Choudhry, Sujit, 2008. "Bridging comparative politics and comparative constitutional law: Constitutional design in divided societies" in (Ed), Choudhry, Sujit, *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation?*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 3-40.

Coggins, Bridget, 2014. "Ker-Lindsay, J. (2012). The Foreign Policy of Counter Secession: Preventing the Recognition of Contested States". *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 25. Issue 1. p. 190-191

Deacon, Russel & Sandry, Alan, 2007. *Devolution in the United Kingdom*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Erk, Jan & Anderson, M. Lawrence, 2010. *The Paradox of Federalism*. Oxon: Routledge.

Erni, Sven, 2014. "The economic of secession: theory and empirics". Department of Economics and Accounting, Universities Friburgensis, Master thesis.

European Committee of the Regions, 2012 "Division of Powers". [Online at]: <https://portal.cor.europa.eu/divisionpowers/countries/MembersLP/Spain/Pages/default.aspx>, accessed 2018-05-07.

Freedom House, 2000, "Freedom in the World 2000: [Online at]: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2000>, accessed 2018-04-06.

Freedom House, 2018, "Freedom in the World 2018: [Online at]: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2018>, accessed 2018-04-06.

Forum of Federations. [Online at]: <http://www.forumfed.org/countries/>, accessed 2018-04-06.

Generalitat de Catalunya. "Resultats electorals". [Online at]: [http://governacio.gencat.cat/ca/pgov\\_ambits\\_d\\_actuacio/pgov\\_eleccions/pgov\\_dades\\_electorals/resultats-2?a=a&id\\_eleccions=A20151&id\\_territori=CA09](http://governacio.gencat.cat/ca/pgov_ambits_d_actuacio/pgov_eleccions/pgov_dades_electorals/resultats-2?a=a&id_eleccions=A20151&id_territori=CA09), accessed 2018-04-07.

Generalitat Valencia "Archivo Histórico Elecotral" [Online at]: [http://www.argos.gva.es/ahe/pls/argos\\_elec/DMEDB\\_ElecComunidades.informeElec?aNComuId=11&aVLengua=c](http://www.argos.gva.es/ahe/pls/argos_elec/DMEDB_ElecComunidades.informeElec?aNComuId=11&aVLengua=c), accessed 2018-04-07

Gerring, John, 2007. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Government of Catalonia, 2017. "Catalan referendum results". [Online at]: [https://web.archive.org/web/20171006155724/http://www.catalangovernment.eu/pres\\_gov/government/en/infographics/303482/catalan-referendum-results.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20171006155724/http://www.catalangovernment.eu/pres_gov/government/en/infographics/303482/catalan-referendum-results.html), accessed 2018-05-09.

Human Development Report, 2004. "Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World". New York: United Nations Development Programme.

Keating, Michael, 2008. "Rival nationalism in a plurinational state: Spain, Catalonia, and the Basque Country" in (Ed) Choudhry, Sujit, *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation?*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 316-341.

Ker-Lindsay, 2012. *The Foreign Policy of Counter Secession: Preventing the Recognition of Contested States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Levrat et al. 2017. "Catalonia's Legitimate Right to Decide". A Report by a Commission of International Experts.

Losada, Antón, 1999. "National identity and self-government in Spain: The Galician Case", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol 5. Issue 3-4. p. 142-163.

McGarry, John & O'Leary, Brendan, 1994. "The Political Regulation of National and Ethnic Conflict", *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 47, Number 1, p. 94-115.

Mill, John Stuart, 1882. *A System Of Logic, Ratiocinative And Inductive*. 8th edition. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Morata, Francesc, 2013. "Spain: the autonomic state in (Ed) John Loughlin, John Kincaid, Wilfried Swenden, *Routledge Handbook of Regionalism and Federalism*. p. 273-286.

Moreno, Luis, 1988. "Scotland and Catalonia: The Path to Home Rule". *Scottish Government Yearbook 1988*.

Moreno, Luis, 2006. "Scotland, Catalonia, Europeanization and the 'Moreno Question'", *Scottish Affairs*, Vol 54. p. 1-21.

Núñez, 1997. "National reawakening within a changing society: The Galician movement in Spain (1960-97)". *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 3, Issue 2. p 29-56

O'Leary, Brendan et al. 2001. *Right-sizing the State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Popper, Karl, 1959. *The Logic of scientific discovery*. Reprint 2002, London: Routledge Classics.

Qvortrup, Matt, 2014. *Referendums and Ethnic Conflict*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

*Spanish Constitution*, 1978.

*Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia*, 2006. "Organic Act 6/2006 of the 19th July, on the Reform of the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia". Parliament de Catalunya.

Tierney, Stephen, 2008. "Giving with one hand: Scottish devolution within a unitary state" in (Ed) Choudhry, Sujit, *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation?*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 438-460.

Tortella, Gabriel, 2017. *Catalonia in Spain: History and Myth*. Cham: Palgrave

Viver, C. Pi-Sunyer, 2013. "The Distribution of Competences in Spain a Year After the Ruling 31/2010 of the Constitutional Court: The Reaffirmation of the *Unitary State*?" in (Ed), Alberto López-Basaguren, Leire Escaped San Epifanio, *The Ways of Federalism in Western Counties and the Horizons of Territorial Autonomy in Spain Volume 1*. New York: Springer Heidelberg.

Warf, Barney & Ferras, Carlos, 2015. "Nationalism, identity and landscape in contemporary Galicia, *Space and Polity*, Vol. 19, Issue 3. p. 256-272.