

## **New Frontiers in European Studies**

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## **Revisiting the Paradigmatic Case of the Spanish Transition to Democracy: European Integration, Citizenship and Political Culture.**

### **Introduction**

Recent events in Spain deem it necessary to revisit the Spanish transition to democracy and to analyse it, with the benefit of hindsight, from a different perspective. There is enough evidence to support the claim that, although not without its problems, the Spanish process of multi-level transitions succeeded in developing a strong market economy within the framework of integration into Europe, raising the welfare indicators to Western European levels, establishing a robust democracy, (Waisman 2005: 1-3), internationalising its bourgeoisie and transforming the identity of Spanish society. Back in the 1970s and 1980s this multi-level process captured the imagination of Europe and the world; Spain went from being an international pariah and a European anomaly to being the European centre of attention. The core European countries were eager for the Spanish democratisation to succeed; unlike Portugal and Greece, Spain was a middle-sized country (35 million people against the 9 million in Greece and Portugal in 1975) whose integration into Europe could present bigger challenges and rewards. Moreover, the Spanish transition gave an external “purpose” to the European Community (EC) at a time when it was lagging impetus. During the final days of the Franco regime, frustrated with the lack of convincing reforms by the then President Arias Navarro, the EC coordinated a fierce wave of hostility against the dictatorship. France and Germany were, at the time, particularly vociferous in their condemnation of the regime and their support for the opposition (Crespo MacLennan 2004: 149-151). It was the German social democrats, the eurocommunist groups and the Socialist International who were more active in supporting the opposition to the Franco regime (*ibid*: 178). Even in Britain condemnation of the regime was widespread. It was in this atmosphere of European pro-democratic euphoria that the Spanish transition to democracy was achieved and how it was understood. Although this helps explain why the earlier studies of the democratic transition were overtly enthusiastic about the prospects for democracy in Spain, we should avoid the temptation to undermine the achievements of what was, by almost any standards, a successful process.

However, it is now being argued whether or not, regardless of what the academic community may have claimed, the Spanish transition produced a functional democratic system. The spontaneous emergence of pro-democracy social movements seems to support the notion that Spanish democracy is fundamentally flawed. Could it be that the Spanish transition did not deserve the plaudits it received? The answer to this question deserves careful consideration as it could have important consequences not only for Spain but also for Europe. As I have said before, Spain has long been hailed as an example of how to achieve a democratic transition through consensus, which is supposed to ensure a peaceful transfer of power<sup>1</sup>, but it can also hamper the new democratic institutions that suffer from the legacy of authoritarianism. If Spain were not the success everyone claimed, then that would end of the debate about a supposed “Spanish model”. It is my view that the Spanish democratisation should have never been referred to as a “model” since there were many particularities that defined this process. One of such particularities that had a considerable influence in the process of Spanish democratisation, and one that is often overlooked, was the process of integration with Western Europe. The quality of democracy in Spain reflects the ability of European institutions to inherently promote democracy. As current events in the vicinity of Europe unfold, the European Union’s (EU) democratic pull jumps to the fore once again.

Integration into Europe has always been linked with a democratic “conditionality”. Although formal democratic criteria for prospective members was not formalised until the so-called Copenhagen Criteria of 1993, the use of language that limited membership to European institutions to some sort of democratic principles can be traced all the way back to the Treaties of Rome. Although nowhere in the Treaty is the word democracy used, the Treaty does invite other peoples of Europe that share the ideals of “peace and liberty” to join in the integrationists efforts of the Six (Treaty of Rome 1957: prologue). As a wider, at least geographically, instrument of European integration, the Council of Europe did refer to democracy and fundamental freedoms in its founding treaty (The Treaty of London 1949); however, due to its non-binding nature, the Council of Europe has often been unable to enforce democratic conditionality or effectively influence democratic development in its member states. Nevertheless, Spain did not join until 1977, when at least some convincing steps towards democratisation had already been taken, and Greece was very much forced to leave the Council in 1969 as the Regime of the Colonels all but suspended democracy in the country. Furthermore, the Council of Europe’s European Social Charter of 1961 (which

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete account of these pacts see Colomer 1995, Linz & Stepan 1996 (Chapter 6) and Powell 2001. For a comprehensive analysis of how elite pacts influence democratic transitions and consolidations see Higley & Burton 1998 and Przeworski 1991.

Spain did not ratify until 1980) goes a long way in defining the sort of social interactions (mainly in a setting of labour relations) that define a democratic society. Back on the EU integration path, all of its major treaties from the Single European Act (SEA) of 1986 onwards have included specific allusions to democracy; the SEA makes specific reference to the promotion of democracy “on the basis of the fundamental rights recognised in the constitutions and laws of the Member States”, it refers to the “democratic peoples of Europe” and also to the “responsibility incumbent upon Europe... to display the principles of democracy” (SEA 1986: prologue). Article 130 of The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 introduces clear guidelines for the development and cooperation external relations of the EU, and establishes that the “policy in this area shall contribute to the general objective of developing and consolidating democracy”. The Amsterdam Treaty introduced the basic principles upon which the EU is founded describing them as “liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States” (Treaty of Amsterdam 1997: Article 1, section 8a.). The Treaty of Nice amendments to the EU Treaty include specific guidelines for development and technical aid to third countries; section 16 explains that the “Community policy in this area shall contribute to the general objective of developing and consolidating democracy and the rule of law” (Treaty of Nice 2001; Article 1, section 16). Finally, the Treaty of Lisbon is literally full of references to democratic values and institutions: from the reference to a common European democratic heritage (Article 1, section 1) to the goal of improving the democratic legitimacy of the Union (preamble).

Spain’s path to democracy has been influenced not only by the democratic institutional progression evident in the chronology of the European Treaties, but also by many socio-cultural and political factors emanating from non-institutionalised European practices, values and norms. In Spain, the overlapping processes of democratisation and integration into Europe influenced each other along the way. These two simultaneous developments were (and still are) so intertwined that it would be futile and fruitless to look for a causality sequence between the two; it is neither my intention nor my claim to find a direct causality between European integration and democratisation. However, in the light of current events in Spain and in the vicinity of Europe, it is important to re-examine what role the EU played in the transition to democracy in Spain, how successful it was and what lessons can be learned from this experience. This paper looks at these issues by presenting a number of clear examples of how the institutionalised and non-institutionalised European practices

positively influenced the consolidation of democracy in Spain. The first part of this paper deals with the role democratisation theories attribute to internationalisation; the second part of the paper deals with specific examples of how Europeanisation (understood as a process of internationalisation) positively influenced the democratic development in Spain; the final part of this paper discusses the lessons to be learned from the Spanish case and how these can be applied in today's challenging environment.

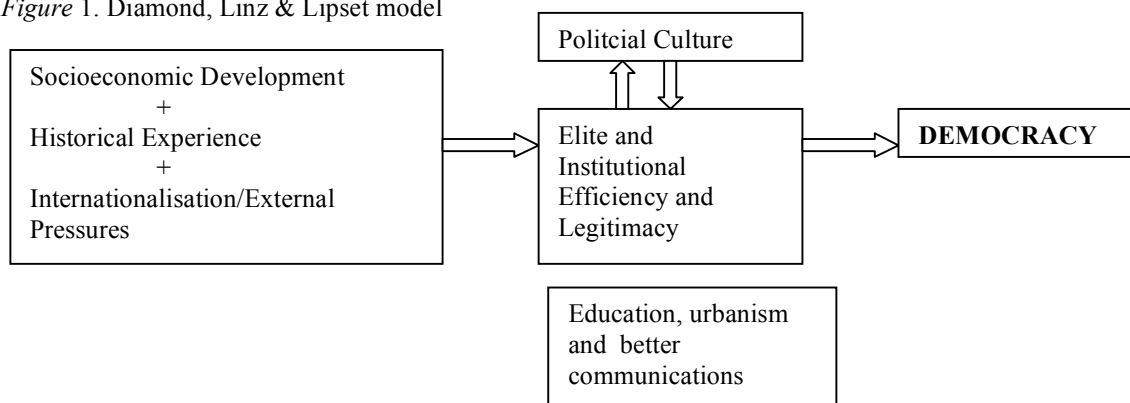
### **Internationalisation and Democracy**

There are models of democratisation, such as the ones proposed by Linz & Stepan (1996) or Diamond, Linz and Lipset (1995), that propose explanatory frameworks that allow for different causalities ranging from political culture to socioeconomic development and international factors. Linz & Stepan's model refers to five overlapping "arenas" in which democratic change is necessary in order to be consolidated. These arenas are: a lively civil society, a relatively autonomous political society, rule of law, a usable state and an economic society (Linz & Stepan 1996: xiv). We could say that, of the five arenas two can be dealt by institutional considerations (rule of law and a usable state), two can be explained as culturalist variables (civil society and an independent political society), and one derives mainly from socioeconomic reasons (economic society); probably contrary to what modernisation theories claim, "democratic consolidation requires much more than elections and markets" (*ibid*: 6-7). Certainly elections and a market economy are necessary for democratic consolidation but are not by themselves enough to establish it. What is more, the fact that the five "arenas" interact and reinforce each other means that there are institutional, culturalist and socioeconomic factors constantly combining with domestic and external actors to consolidate democracy.

In a similar vein, Diamond *et al.* (*fig. 1*) agree with the notion that as socioeconomic growth takes place democracy becomes an ever-likelier outcome (therefore it is hard to find functional democracies in underdeveloped countries or undemocratic regimes in developed nations), however, they do not see economic growth as the only reason for democracy or for a transformation in political culture. In fact, they emphatically claim that "economic development is not a prerequisite for democracy" (Diamond *et al.* 1995: 24). They do admit that socioeconomic development can be a significant foundation for democratisation but they also place a great deal of importance on other historical (previous experiences with democracy), external (openness of the economy, influence from abroad, pressure from abroad) and domestic (elite and institutional efficiency and legitimacy,

urbanism, education) factors. At the same time, they also disagree with the notion that a favourable political culture is a prerequisite for democratisation since “cultural patterns and beliefs do change in response to new institutional incentives, socioeconomic development and historical experience” (*ibid*: 21). Their model considers more than the relationship between socioeconomic growth and political culture; they consider the role the elites play (in promoting development and in shaping political culture), the effectiveness of new democratic institutions (which influences and is influenced by political culture) and the inability of undemocratic regimes to deal with a more urban and educated society with better means of communication.

Figure 1. Diamond, Linz & Lipset model



Linz & Stepan’s and Diamond *et al.*’s models of democratisation bring into the fore more than institutional arrangements, pacts, elite behaviour, socioeconomic development and cultural determinisms. By introducing variables such as historical experience, institutional efficiency and external influence they allow for more factors to interact as causal elements in democratic transitions. History has proven that even when societies have preferred democracy to any other form of government, this does not always happen; history has also proven that socioeconomic development is not enough to predict democratisation; and history has also shown us that clever institutional arrangements and elite pacts can crumble under the pressure of external factors. Democracy is not that easy to achieve and there is no unique formula to achieve it; rather, a combination of factors have to act together by influencing different spheres of social and political life for democracy to be consolidated.

My analysis of the transition to democracy in Spain refers to one of those factors that play a part in the opera of democratisation: international influence. The way international factors interacted with domestic developments, although not unique, is certainly noteworthy in the case of Spain. Since the Southern European transitions to democracy, there have been many other cases in which dual processes of democratisation and internationalisation overlapped and influenced each other (mainly Post-Communist

European countries joining the EU and the isolated case of Mexico integrating with North America). Spain, Portugal and Greece were, however, the first nations to attempt democratisation whilst integrating economically, politically and socially with other more mature and consolidated democracies. In the case of these three countries, international pressure was far more relevant because they were embroiled in an internationalisation process that made them extremely susceptible to international events. What is more, as many academics have noted, the process of internationalisation (i.e. the linking of the political, economic and social structures of a state to international forces) is particularly acute in countries joining the European institutions as this entails a whole process of Europeanisation. Although one could be tempted to think Europeanisation is no different from any other transition towards an interdependent system, we should consider that Europeanisation distinguishes itself from any other process of internationalisation precisely because it formalises the links of interdependence in institutional arrangements (Closa 2001: 16-17).

Although cases such as Southern and post-communist Europe, and even Mexico, clearly validate the notion that international factors impact transitions to democracy in significant ways, democratisation theorists have tended to either ignore (Ingehart; Inglehart & Welzel; Sidney & Verba; Przeworski & Limongi) or underestimate them (Boix & Stokes; Fukuyama; Higley & Burton; Huntington; Linz & Stepan). This is hardly surprising since democracy is by definition an inward-looking procedure of political and social organisation; as such, domestic factors will always play a prominent role in the process of consolidating it. At the same time, most democratic transitions since the end of World War II have been processes dominated by domestic considerations, in which international factors have only been “conducive” to change (Huntington 1991). Between 1945 and 2003 there are very few examples of authoritarian regimes being removed by third countries in order to be replaced by democratic regimes; therefore international causality has very much been overlooked.

Certainly, I am not claiming that international considerations are more important than socioeconomic development, good institutional arrangements or responsible elites, but I maintain that they, in some cases more than in others, can have considerable influence in democratisation. Certainly there is evidence to suggest that international factors play an increasingly important role as socioeconomic development advances, especially since economic growth usually involves reforms that bring to the fore new cleavages sensitive to new international influences. As more internationalised elites sensitive to global

developments emerge, the old regimes find themselves unable to accommodate growing demands for access to international markets that are usually reserved for democratic countries (Holman 1993). As growth forces authoritarian regimes to internationalise their economies further they become more sensitive to “stronger pressures from Western industrialised democracies – and from their own elites trained in Western (especially U.S.) Universities” (Diamond *et al.* 1995: 22). Once authoritarian regimes can no longer provide the conditions for continuing development, they lose support from the elites and population alike, and a process of political reform is then set in motion. At this point, both old and new elites will try to gain support and legitimacy; the old elites will desperately try to prove their reformist credentials to show they are willing to secure democracy whilst the new elites will try to prove they are capable of delivering democratic reforms. Non-political elites (the business class, civil society leaders, NGOs) will also be expecting a clear compromise with reform; the recognition of the democratising efforts in one country by other democratic nations has a big impact on the legitimacy the new democratic regime will have. If a new democratic regime, for example, joins the International Organisation (IO) that holds a democratic clause (regardless of the willingness of the IO to enforce such clause), it will go a long way to prove the democratic credentials of the new regime (Pevehouse 2002). Once a country is “accepted” into the democratic international community, getting expelled from it again can have serious political costs.

To better understand how the effects of external factors influence individual transitions, we have to identify the varying levels of linkage to and the leverage of Western democracies in each case (Levitsky & Way 2005). Leverage refers primarily to the “power” which a given democracy (or group of democracies) has over an authoritarian regime or the amount of pressure it is willing and able to put in that regime to democratise. For example, if a regime is dependent on specific economic ties with or direct aid from a given democracy, that democracy can choose to exert or not exert substantial leverage in a push to democratise that country. Whilst leverage (i.e. the use of “power” or the threat to use it) can increase the cost of repression, electoral fraud or other government abuses thus playing a role in ending full-on authoritarian regimes, it is rarely sufficient to convince regimes to fully democratise (*ibid*: 22). When leverage is combined with international linkage to Western democracies it becomes a truly effective democratising factor. Unlike leverage, linkage works at economic, geopolitical, social, communications and civil society levels thus penetrating every area of the state. Linkage not only increases the costs of undemocratic behaviour for the governing elites but also for everybody else. Businesses not only benefit financially from linkage but they also learn to play by democratic rules;



civil society groups not only benefit from the support coming from organisations with similar aims in other countries but they also learn how to organise themselves better to defend democracy; a better educated mass of technocrats benefits from being part of a wide network of countries where they can perform their trade, expand their businesses or attend universities; wide sectors of society benefit from access to a wide range of information sources, entertainment, travel, etc. In short, “when linkage is extensive, international influences may be decisive, contributing to democratisation with highly unfavourable domestic conditions” (*ibid*: 33).

### **Social and political internationalisation and the Spanish transition**

The process of European integration is internationalisation taken one step further. The process by which perspective members integrate into Europe represents a formal institutionalisation of interdependence that exist simply as informal arrangements elsewhere. The transformations inherent in Europeanisation for perspective members with unconsolidated democracies are like nothing else. Both the prospect and the actual process of integration are equally as influential in the democratisations of potential members. “The EU enlargement process enhances both linkage and leverage in the aspiring candidate countries, as membership entails a high level of integration and policy coordination, with regulations encompassing virtually every aspect of democratic governance. EU political conditionality [formalised in the 1993 Copenhagen Criteria] differs from that of other multilateral organisation in many ways” (Levitsky & Way 2005: 27). Although the process of European integration has come a long way since the Spanish transition to democracy, the Spanish transition is significant because, unlike some of the countries that joined in 2004 and 2007, Spain has been fully Europeanized.

If we were to apply a strictly modernisation rationale to the story of Spanish democratisation, we would have little choice but to accept the pivotal role European integration played in this process. Since modernisation theory explains democracy on purely socioeconomic terms, the unquestionably positive economic benefits EC membership had for Spain should be enough to convince the sceptics: in 1989 European aid represented a staggering 1.5 per cent of Spanish GDP and, according to some estimates, EC/EU backed projects mobilized an average of about 3.4 per cent of Spanish GDP in the period between 1994 to 1999 (Pastor 2003: 10). Spain’s European fuelled economic growth allowed Spain’s per capita GDP to increase from 70 per cent of the EU’s GDP per capita average in 1986 to 88 per cent in 2003 (the year before the enlargement to

Eastern Europe lowered the EU's average). What is more, European social and regional policies (The European Social Charter, Title V of the Single European Act and Regional European Policy) made sure economic growth did not promote further economic inequality. Considerable European aid started flowing towards Spain since before democracy was consolidated by anybody's standards. The European Investment Bank, in accordance to pre-accession agreements, started its operations in Spain from 1981. In the period between 1981 and Spanish accession to the EC in 1986, the Bank had channelled in excess of 550 million euros in loans towards all sorts of development projects. This figure almost doubled (in excess of 960 million euros) the following year (European Investment Bank 2008). We should also consider the impact of the PTA in Spain, which resulted in a considerable increase in Spanish exports towards the EC (27.5 per cent in the twelve months following the agreement according to official figures) and opened the door for an even greater liberalisation of the economy. The PTA was also (wrongly) believed to be a precursor to full integration, it encouraged the government to take unilateral measures in preparation for accession that included adoption of the VAT, further industrial restructuring and increasing economic flexibility (Royo 2003: 8).

If one shared the view that fairly distributed socioeconomic development is the only factor behind successful democratisation (Boix & Stokes 2003: 543) that would be the end of the debate. The EU has clearly had a positive influence on Spanish socioeconomic development; hence it played an important role in Spain's transition to and consolidation of democracy. Demonstrating the socio-cultural and political influence of the EU, although not impossible, is a completely different task. This sort of influence is, in great measure, what Levitsky & Way describe as international linkage. Since, unlike leverage, linkage is "primarily a source of soft power... its effects are diffuse, indirect and often difficult to detect" (Levitsky & Way 2005: 25), which may help explain why they are often ignored. By analysing ways in which accession into Europe changed Spanish social, cultural and political structures, I hope to paint a clear picture of how international linkage positively affected the process of democratisation in Spain.

There are many examples that back the theory that the social and political pillars of the EU were as much (or maybe even more) of a factor in the transformation of the Spanish state as were the economic ramifications of joining the European project. One of those examples is the way the Europeanisation of policymaking in Spain led to a strengthening of the dual federalist model over intergovernmental competition in the state of the autonomies (Börzel 2001). As policy competencies are transferred to the EU, the distribution of resources

between the Spanish central state and the regions is transformed. “Thereby increasing the mutual interdependence between the two levels of government” (*ibid*: 18). Although this may seem not to have had a direct effect on democratisation, the Europeanisation of policy implementation has helped the Spanish State of the Autonomies develop a more functional decentralised political system. Authoritarian regimes’ exacerbated centralism leads to local and regional governments becoming mere symbols of the regime without any actual power. As democratisation develops, power becomes decentralised and returns to the local and regional levels, which usually struggle with their newfound responsibilities and notoriety. In the case of Spain, effective distribution of power strengthened democracy not only by bringing local independent institutions closer to the citizenry, but also by facilitating the access to power to individuals and political forces not linked to the regime or the traditional opposition (Powell 2001: 240). What is more, by offering a new structure of political opportunities to the regions (i.e. access to resources bypassing the central state), the EU has helped correct an imbalance that existed in the Spanish Constitution of 1978. Decentralisation was considered a contentious issue during the Constitution’s negotiations as the Francoist regarded the integrity of the Spanish state as a *sin qua non* for participating in the transition. Hence, decentralisation resulted in a very loose institutional framework that rewarded competitive politics over cooperation (Field & Hamann 2008: 16). Cooperation amongst the Regions and between the Regions and the State increased considerably as they reached agreements in order to access European funds and influence; thus cooperation over European issues has been far more common than over any other strictly domestic issue (Börzel 2001).

There is also evidence that suggests Europe had a ‘normalising’ effect in the Spanish system of political parties as a whole, and on the Partido Popular (PP) in particular (Román Marugán 2001). The transformation of the Spanish political party system is the perfect example of how the process of European political and social integration helped transform a part of the political system, specific institutions and the political culture of a country. It is clear that “since the democratisation of the Spanish system, the Right has undergone a series of rapid ideological and organizational changes” (Llamazares 2005: 315), and evidence suggests that an important catalyst for these changes has been European integration. The framework of institutional Europe was the perfect space for manifestations of the ideological and political redefinition of the Spanish Right. One of the most striking effects of the Europeanisation of the PP was its embracement of neo-liberal economic models and the abandonment of ‘the ambiguous attitudes towards markets and capitalism that historically characterised Spanish conservatism’ (*ibid*: 322). Democratisation leads to

a centripetal tendency amongst political parties, but in the case of the Spanish right, European politics became a core element in its ideological, organisational, and structural transformation. The success of the political Right in moving towards the centre following Aznar's centralization of the Alianza Popular (AP) under the new PP structure in 1989 was extraordinary. The destitution of Fraga as leader of the PP symbolized a "staged" break up with Francoism. In what is usually perceived as an electoral strategy to appeal to a larger portion of the population, the PP joined the European's People Party (EPP) in 1989 and fully adopted the traditional centre-right, moderate view that characterises the European Christian Democratic parties. At the same time, the EPP's self-positioning as part of "the political family of the centre-right" with roots that "run deep in the history and civilization of the European continent" (W. Martens, EPP website), provided the PP with an opportunity to enter fully into the European debate whilst continuing its ideological path towards the centre. Up until that point, the Spanish right had been more focused on internal scuffles than on European integration. The AP tended to have a very critical approach towards any Unión del Centro Democrático (UCD) or Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) policies regarding Europe. By changing its position on European integration and ending its European ostracism, the PP not only transformed itself ideologically but also presented a credible centre-right alternative to the Spanish electorate. The emergence of a credible opposition to the PSOE sparked political competition and a serious debate over European policy. What is more, Spaniards began to define themselves on more traditional left/right political orientations. Whilst in 1981 more than 30% of the population could not place themselves anywhere in the political spectrum and only 17% declared themselves to be centrists; by 1990 almost 25% of the population considered themselves to be centrists (raised to 28% in 1995), and the respondents who placed themselves in the centre-right of the spectrum accounted for 22% of the total (an increase of more than 3% from 1981). The support for the more extreme right also rose by 3% (World Values Survey Data 1981, 1990 & 1995).

The other parties, however, were by no means exempt from a heavy European influence. The transformation of the PSOE into a party capable of governing was just as important as the moderation of the Right (Yunuen Ortega 2000: 152-155). In order to understand how and why the PSOE had to change, we have to consider that the memory of the Civil War was a strong conditioning factor in the transition to democracy. There is a consensus that the transition to democracy in Spain was a relatively peaceful process, because a sentiment of "never again" prevailed amongst the population (Varela Ortega 2000: 152-155). It was in this atmosphere of "conciliation over confrontation" that the PSOE and the Spanish

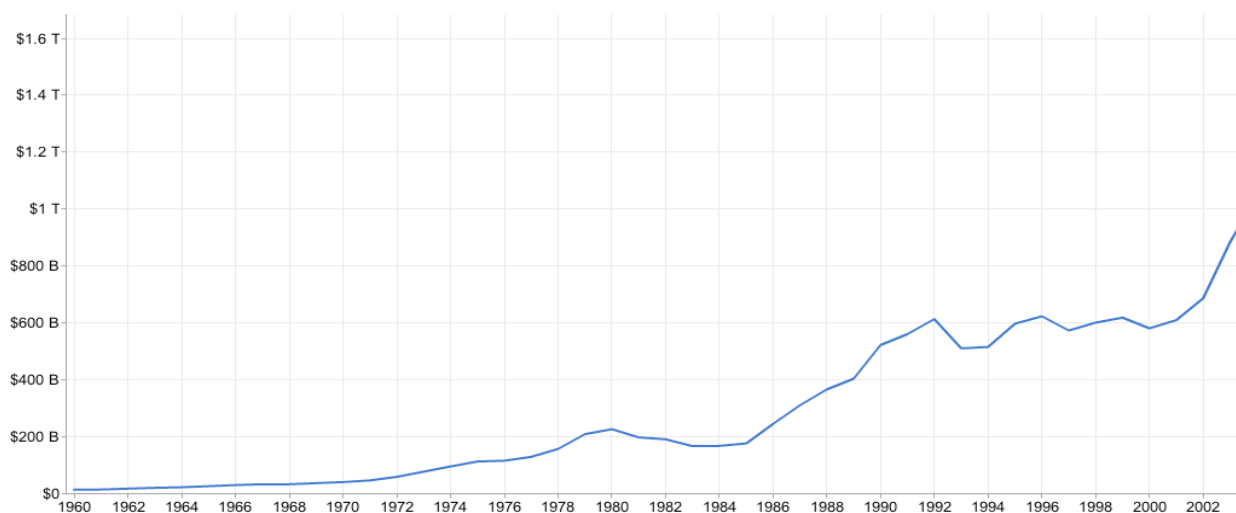
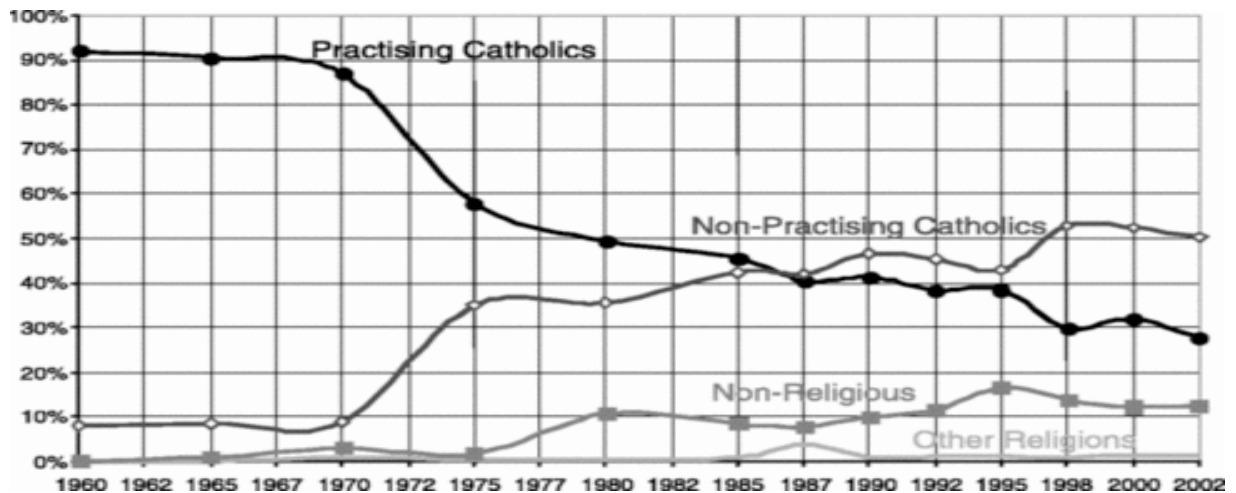
Communist Party (PCE) had to enter the electoral arena. Both the PSOE and the PCE had been the historical oppositions to the regime, and many of their members and activists had personally endured Franco's repression. Trying to appeal to a majority of centrist voters without alienating their base was a balancing act for both parties. Whilst the Communist, under Santiago Carrillo, tried to appeal to the general population by finally renouncing Leninism and joining the eurocommunist movement, the PSOE, under the leadership of Felipe González, used its links with European social democratic parties to boost their democratic credentials. The PSOE in particular had strong links with the German and the Swedish social democrats, which they used to get support in the shape of financial aid (especially from the German SDP), counsel and advice (Yunuen Ortega 2008: 135). The fact that some of the European superstars of the centre-left, such as Willy Brandt and Olof Palme, personally endorsed the PSOE could not have hurt either (Blanco y Negro 26/4/1975; Europa Press 23/12/1975). On the other hand, whilst the PSOE had been busy during the Franco years promoting the cause of Spanish democracy all around Europe, the communists had focused on opposing the regime from within. The PCE was heavily involved in the creation of illegal trade unions and the publishing of anti-Franco propaganda. As laudable as these efforts were, it did mean that when the transition came, the PCE was still regarded by most Spaniards as an anti-systemic party that could destabilise the whole democratic process. Considering the events surrounding the 1981 attempted coup, one could argue the Spanish electorate was not far off the mark; if the PCE had done better in the 1979 election (the PCE got a mere 10 per cent of the vote), it is hard to predict how the armed forces would have reacted. Unfortunately for the PCE, they did not count with the recognition in Europe that the PSOE had, which was so helpful in convincing the electorate they were prepared to govern. By the time of the 1990 elections the Spanish party system and the way parties were perceived was almost fully Europeanised.

Without turning to the debate on whether or not values, attitudes and political culture play a part in democratisation, we should acknowledge that the majority of democratisation scholars agree that some sort of social consensus supporting democracy is a necessary condition for its consolidation. In Inglehart's terms, as countries become more developed (post-industrial) secular-rational and self-expression values (individual liberty, autonomy, tolerance, human diversity, etc.) slowly replace traditional and survival values. Once the majority of the population emphasises secular-rational/self-expression values over traditional/survival values, the pressure to democratise becomes greater than what authoritarian regimes can handle (Inglehart & Welzel 2005). This view accepts

socioeconomic development as the single cause for changes in values; however, I disagree with this notion. I shall therefore explore the European influence in one of the key attitudinal changes Inglehart believes is necessary for democratisation: the switch towards a secularised society.

In Spain, secularisation was probably more important for democratisation than in other countries because of the heavy presence of religious symbols in the Franco regime, especially the prominence of the Opus Dei in Franco's close circle of collaborators (New York Times 18/12/1970). According to one author, Spain's political culture was 'hampered not only by the pre-authoritarian regime but also by cultural traditions that exalted monism, uncritical acquiescence of religious and political dogmas and intolerance' (Waisman 2005: viii). The argument that the drop in religiosity is linked to socioeconomic development is not new. Although there is much truth in this assertion, it is not true that the levels of religiosity are only linked to socioeconomic development. In America, levels of religiosity and religious practice have not declined as in Europe despite the immense expansion of its economy. 'As opposed to the continuous religious effervescence of the US, European societies... have undergone more consistent processes of secularisation... showing much lower levels of religious commitments than people in the US' (Requena 2005: 372). This can be explained by the historic differences in the State-Church relations between them. In Europe, the mutual dependence of state and church 'is responsible for the greater retreat of religious beliefs and practices', whilst in the US, the historical detachment of the state with a particular form of religion means that political modernisation took place outside the realm of religion (*ibid*: 374). As the figures below show, Spain followed the general relation between socioeconomic development and the decline of religiosity. However, on a closer look, things are not quite as straight forward; we find that the biggest drop in religiosity in Spain took place between 1970 and 1975, whilst the economy expanded at its fastest between 1985 and 1992. Furthermore, as the economy languished between 1992 and 1998, the percentage of practicing Catholics was still dropping. A more logical explanation for these developments is socio-political rather than economic. The case of Spain follows European paradigms of secularisation (where state-religion relations are historically more conflictive); rejecting the Catholic Church meant rejecting the Franco regime and its inherent Catholicism. There were obviously no EU policies targeted against religion in Spain, neither was secularisation a condition for accession, but the fact that Spain was trying to reclaim its role in Europe may have played a part in this process.

FIGURE 1 & 2 Religious Changes in Spain, 1960-2002 (Requema 2005: 377) With Information from the Centro de Estudios Sociologicos. Figure 2 collects data from the World Bank Development Indicators<sup>2</sup>. Trillions US Dollars (2011)



Most scholars agree that social capital, “understood as generalised trust among the citizenry”, helps eradicate authoritarian tendencies and, thus, consolidate democracy (Encarnación 2001: 54). It is also widely believed that a vibrant civil society, by developing horizontal networks independent of the state, as well as democratic institutions, are the two main creators of social capital. Kerstin Hamann’s study of Spanish civil society, especially workers unions, during the transition period, concluded that ‘implicitly or explicitly the promise of EU membership helped the country’s democratisation process’ (Hamann 2003: 47). In her view the positive reputation Europe had amongst the trade unions, much of which had been won by supporting them in their internal struggle against Franco, and the positive advice from other European trade unions (mainly German), persuaded the Spanish unions to hold back in their original instincts to reject the harsh economic measures necessary to join the EC, or at least moderate them at the beginning. If the Unions would have rejected the measures, it could have meant real trouble for a still

[http://www.google.com/publicdata?ds=wbwdi&met\\_y=ny\\_gdp\\_mktp\\_cd&idim=country:ESP&dl=en&hl=en&q=spanish+gdp+graph](http://www.google.com/publicdata?ds=wbwdi&met_y=ny_gdp_mktp_cd&idim=country:ESP&dl=en&hl=en&q=spanish+gdp+graph)

feeble democracy facing serious economic hardship. The actual weight the unions had during the transition and consolidation is, however, debatable, especially since “Spanish workers fled the Unions almost as fast as they joined them” (Encarnación 2001: 67). Regardless of the actual role of the Unions, it is clear that whatever explicit pressure Europe wielded was complemented by its mere presence as an incentive; “in the absence of a strong civil society, the prospect of a better future as part of Europe may have absorbed much of the function with which civil society is credited – such as reinforcing the commitment to democracy” (Hamman 2003: 62). However, if Spain’s transition from dictatorship to democracy took place in the absence of a flourishing civil society (Encarnación 2001: 55), it does not mean social capital was not needed, but rather that it was created in other ways. Strong democratic political institutions often take over the creation of social capital where a weak civil society is unable to do so, thus producing “the very same pro-democratic values and orientations believed to aid a flourishing civil society in a consolidating democracy” (*ibid*: 77). This happens because “formal laws play an important role in shaping informal norms...whereas informal norms make the creation of certain kinds of political institution more or less likely” (Fukuyama 2000: 111). The EC provided (to an extent) certain formal “laws” or practices which played a role in developing norms in Spain, which in turn made the emergence of democratic institutions more likely.

There is a view shared by some that besides conditioning accession into the Common Market and giving moral support to the opposition, “there was very little Europe could do” (Carr & Fusi 1981: 214; Poulantzas 1976). Although I do not agree with it, I accept this may be a valid argument when referring exclusively to the narrow definition of the transition to democracy in Spain (i.e. the political events that unfolded between 1975 and 1978). But we should consider that besides Europeanisation by geographical proximity and example, the EU from the very beginning has strived to advance policies aimed purposely at the development of a single European society that holds democratic values at its core. The Treaty of Rome established the first organisms aimed at alleviating social imbalances within the community: the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF). The ESF in particular was created “in order to improve employment opportunities for workers in the common market and to contribute thereby to raising the standard of living”. Although no mention of solidarity was explicitly made, article 123 of the Treaty of Rome did say the ESF “shall have the task of rendering the employment of workers easier and of increasing their geographical and occupational mobility within the Community” (Treaty of Rome 1957: Art 123); which was then



translated into its current objective to “reduce differences in prosperity and living standards across EU Member States and regions, and therefore promoting economic and social cohesion” (European Social Fund website, 2010). Then in 1975 the European Regional Development Fund was established with the specific aim of strengthening the “economic and social cohesion in the European Union by correcting imbalances between its regions” (ERDF website, 2006). The 1986 Single European Act (SEA), however, consolidates much of the previous ideals and loose interpretations into a clear and concise objective: the member states are “to work together to promote democracy on the basis of the fundamental rights recognized in the constitutions and laws of the Member States... notably freedom, equality and social justice” (SEA 1986: prologue). The SEA also introduced Title V to the EEC treaty, delineating clear objectives in the area of social and economic cohesion and the policies to achieve them.

The EU model “has been described as a “social market economy” that combines a market system with internal solidarity and mutual support” (Pastor 2002: 37-38). The internal solidarity and mutual support elements of the EU do not refer exclusively to economic aid. We could say that “the EU has acted as an independent variable... in two ways: directly as a symbolic referent and a legitimising factor, or indirectly as the origin of certain sectoral policies that influence the political processes” (Closa 2001: 521). I have already presented examples of both these instances: the analyses on dual federalism and the of the Europeanisation of foreign policy are good examples of the EU as the origin of sectoral policies; the transformation of the Spanish centre-right and the EU as a source of social capital are good examples of Europe working as a symbolic/legitimizing factor. I will now define how specific policies in the socio-cultural arena (a combination of both variables) influenced the Spanish system and helped it become more democratic.

Since 1977 the European Commission set out a plan to develop a European Cultural Policy, which is designed to boost people’s awareness of European cultural identity (Shore 1993: 779). This policy was later recognised by the Member States in the European Councils of 1983 and 1985. The formalisation of this policy follows an implicit understanding that social and cultural integration is a common by product of economic and political integration. The Commission’s efforts focus on developing a policy that shapes the imminent changes in social identity that follow European integration. It would have been irresponsible to believe that the opening of borders to goods, capitals, services and labour, coupled with a process of political integration would not have had repercussions on identity and culture. Hence the effort put into developing a European cultural policy

emerges from the need to guide Europe from “being there” (in buildings, institutions, social patterns, migration flows, etc.) to Europe as a source of identity and belonging. The Commissions Directorate general for Information, Culture and Communication was put in charge of developing a “good marketing campaign” for the idea of a supra-national Europe (*ibid*: 783). The clearest indication that there is a European cultural policy aimed not only at promoting cultural activities but also at promoting a European cultural identity is found in article 128 of the Maastricht Treaty, where it reads that “the Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore” (Maastricht Treaty 1992: art. 128).

Before the Maastricht treaty formalised a set of socio-cultural policies, an informal European social model already existed. This social model was characterised by a wide welfare state that covers social protection, income maintenance, health care, social services and unemployment protection. Even before Spain joined the EC in 1982, there had been a clear trend towards Europeanisation of its social model. Although the percentage of GDP spent on social services (i.e. the welfare state) in Spain did not surge dramatically with Europeanisation (a 3.4% raise between 1980 to 1995), it had more to do with a general restraint on public spending imposed by a tough economic situation and the need to comply with EC directives in order to join the Economic and Monetary Union. However, even if in quantitative terms (money spent) the Spanish welfare state did not experience a radical change, the reformulation of the Spanish welfare state did present clear signs of Europeanisation in the way the money was spent. The more radical changes in the Spanish social model took place “from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s” and were especially evident in the enhancement of social citizenship in the fields of “health care, non-contributory benefits, social services for dependent people, and labour insertion policies” (Gillen and Alvarez 2004: 24). This movement has brought the Spanish social model closer to the European standard in terms of the amount of money spent in social policy and the way this money is spent. Europe has had a direct impact in this process by setting European directives (found in the SEA and the Social Charter) and by providing European funds that are directed at supporting specific social programmes that may not necessarily be national priorities, such as the infrastructure related to the welfare state (job centres, vocational training schools and related expenditure. Europe’s “soft touch” has also had an influence in the development of a specific social model in Spain. For the Spanish population “becoming European has meant, among other aspects, “attaining European levels of social protection”” (Gillen & Alvarez 2004: 26). Since Spain first took steps to

join the EC, it was clear that it had to take on the European discourse, and the policies that came with it, regarding gender equality, justice, the fight against poverty and social security. Even if the ideological support was not there (which I believe it was), access to European funds available to apply such policies was enough of an incentive to apply them.

Those who regard the Spanish transition as a mere pact between elites have been challenged from many fronts. We can no longer ignore the pivotal role played by social mobilisations by students and workers, the organisation of all the opposition parties in favour of a democratic programme, and, particularly, the transformation of the PSOE into a centrist force capable of governing (Yunuen Ortega 2001: 293). Elites did, though, as in any other peaceful transition to democracy, play an important role in Spain's democratisation. At least at the very beginning of the process, the electorate only had the rather limited, although important, function of sanctioning reforms, and most of the decision making took place at the level of party leaders and Francoist high-ranking officials (Fiel & Hamman 2008: 5). Accession into the EC was for the elites at the helm of the transition an important incentive to democratise. The fact that the "EEC was solidly democratic, and had 'set up a stable pattern of rewards and disincentives' for would be members" (Linz & Stepan 1996: 113) meant that the elites were very sensitive to European opinion. It was widely believed that Spain's international ostracism and inability to join European institutions was down to the Franco regime; the majority of the population regarded the EC as a "symbol of democracy and development" and the elites, wanting to benefit from the EC's reputation, understood joining the EC was a "decisive step for the consolidation of democracy" (*ibid*). The fact is that the EC had made it very clear that political reform was a *sin qua non* for integration; the elites knew it and the population knew it. Whether or not this conditionality was a ploy (mainly French) to avoid dealing with the very serious challenges that Spanish integration would mean for the Common Agricultural Policy (Michalski 2006: 284), is irrelevant. Spanish elites perceived that democracy was a condition for European integration. Given that the Spanish economy risked being left behind if Spain did not join the Common Market, and given that the vast majority of the population saw integration with Europe as a positive thing, elites from all sides of the political spectrum saw integration into Europe as essential. Europe's insistence on democracy, coupled with the elites' calculations of the costs of not joining, meant that the Spanish elites' had to be careful to portray a pro-democratic image; the costs of repression or democratic regressions became higher with internationalisation. In other cases where political considerations have been completely ignored, regional integration does not necessarily improve democracy. The case of North American integration is often

used to prove this point. The US's silence on political conditionality and reluctance to pressure the Mexican elites, meant that the political elites in Mexico were comfortable engaging in less than democratic practices, as they did not see the economic agreement linked to their attitudes towards democracy (Gentleman & Zubek 1992).

## **Conclusion**

Recent events in Spain, such as the 15-M social protests, the unsustainable unemployment rate and the collapse of the PSOE in the latest regional elections, underpin the necessity to revisit the Spanish transition to democracy. At the same time, revisiting the case of the Spanish transition can reinforce the EU's democracy promotion strategy; as I have shown before, the institutional, social and cultural influence Europe had in Spain during its transition to democracy has gone a long way in shaping today's Spanish democracy. Europe's approach to Spain's democratisation followed a rationale of linkage (as an example to be followed and an incentive to democratise) and leverage (conditioning entry into the common market and access to development funds on democratic progressions), and proved to be far more influential than most scholars care to give it credit for. Democratic transitions are primarily domestic processes but, as the Spanish case proves, internationalisation can go a long way in shaping the outcome of such processes. Now that democracy promotion is back on the agenda, the EU, and indeed the rest of the Western world, would benefit from reanalysing the Spanish transition. There are certainly lessons to be learned and mistakes to be avoided. Above all, the successful role Europe played in the Spanish transition should convince us that there is no such thing as "gunpoint democracy".

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