

Introduction

by the Coordinator of the Monographic Issue

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“Catalanism” was a political neologism of the 1880s, quite comparable to the usage of “Americanism” in United States. “Catalanism” was a generic term, which stood for nationalism or patriotism. It encompassed all the possible juridical varieties: regionalists, autonomists, federalists, confederates, ultra-radical nationalists and mere cultural nationalists, pro-independence activists and mild sentimentalists, *all could be Catalanists*. The term was all-inclusive. Despite the fact that it contradicted political science conventional wisdom (always based on U.S. examples) which poses that “catch all” parties and single-issue politics are an in contradiction, in Catalonia this “impossible” mix worked like a charm for over a hundred years.

“Catalanism” was the norm until the celebration of the Catalan national holiday on 11 September 2012. A huge demonstration invaded the streets –live on Catalan television and on the local channels, and projected on the web and international media- and it glowed in vibrant color with the pro-independence, lone-star banners (in two versions, leftist, with a yellow triangle and a red star, and right-wing, with a blue triangle and a white star, both now suddenly become somewhat interchangeable) instead of the simple four red horizontal bars on a gold background, a flag centuries old. This was a major symbolic shift. But the monopoly of separatist banners signified a much more important shift in party politics.

Until 2012, separatism had been a minimal electoral option in Catalan politics. In the traditional scheme of things, young males of the appropriate ideologized pre-

disposition, at their most dangerous age in potential for violence, between roughly 16 and 28 years of age, went through a radical nationalist phase, before settling down into marriage, a job, and becoming stable “Catalanist voters”. In the 1990s, young women of similar disposition –a new trend– increasingly joined the small pro-independence formations for a time in their youth, until they too got on with their lives. Female participation helped cool male ardor, so that in those same 1990s, the image of the nationalist “guerrilla”, the “street-fighting man” (via the Rolling Stones), or the terrorist (according to Spanish police), became stale. Mass agitation became the norm, and this historic left-nationalist party, the Esquerra Republicana (ERC), with a past going back to the 1930s, became an “independentist” force that challenged “Catalanist” predominance. But the ERC could not escape its orbit as a satellite of moderate nationalism, a coalition of personalist followers of Pujol and Catalan Christian Democrats, which dominated Catalan politics from 1980 to 2003, except by an alliance with the socialists and the post-communists, an arrangement which seemed impossible until after the 2003 regional elections. When this “unusual” coalition fell apart in 2010, old habits changed quite suddenly. The fact that marriage patterns were no longer secure as heretofore, and that jobs for youth of both sexes are notoriously lacking, probably had something to do with the change to pro-independence enthusiasms. “Catalanism” had lost its role as the maturation of the socialization of youth of Catalan ancestry, and the sexual roles that had kept old -style radical nationalism in place had by now fallen apart.

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In 2012, accordingly, the historic pattern of an all-inclusive attraction seemed to come to an end. Moderate nationalist opinion became assertively pro-independence. “Without complexes” (*desacomplexat*) became the sign, until such an attitude was too obvious to remark on. This dossier attempts to trace and analyze aspects of this shift.

The dossier gathers together different kinds of approaches. Oriol Bartomeus, a researcher with the Institut de Ciències Socials i Polítiques (ICSP) of Barcelona, analyzes opinion polling data gathered by the ICSP over a long term period, to follow tendencies in national identification, so as to trace generational change and ideological displacement (in Catalan: *El canvi generacional i el gir ideològic en el nacionalisme*). The political analyst and academic historian Xavier Casals, author of numerous well-considered books, evaluates Catalan secessionism from the perspective of European so-called “populist” movements (in Spanish: *Cataluña: secesionismo y dinámicas populistas europeas*). Carlos Viñas, a younger scholar, perhaps the top specialist in nationalist soccer hooliganism and nationalist rock bands, deals with “‘No Volem Ser’. Music and Nationalism” (in Castilian Spanish: “‘No queremos ser’. Música y nacionalismo”), while the organizer

of the dossier (and author of this introduction), Enric Ucelay-Da Cal, presents a historical narrative of the evolution to the shift of 2012 (in English: “Catalonia Dreaming: The Rise of Catalan Mass Secessionism, 2010-2015”), and Marcel A. Farinelli, a younger Catalan-Italian scholar, offers a essay (in Spanish: “Ausencia presente: El soberanismo catalán desde su más lejana periferia”) on the effects of the pro-independence shift centered in Barcelona as seen from the furthest periphery of Catalan-language use, the small city of L’Alguer (l’Alghero in Italian) on the west coast of Sardinia. His analysis brings out some of the contradictions between the rival discourses of a “Greater Catalonia”, understood in terms of “soft power” and cultural influence, and the assumptions surrounding the push for independence of “strict Catalonia”, i.e., metropolitan Barcelona and the four Spanish provinces (Barcelona, Girona, Tarragona, and Lleida) that form its hinterland.

Over the last couple of years, nationalist appeals in Catalonia have been formulated on a transition model, a simple formula of past-to-future as an instant two-step change. As frustrations mounted, and the Spanish central government impeded the more magical aspirations regarding such a passage from “oppression” to “freedom”, pro-independence publicists began to speak of a “procés”, literally a process that implied that the achievement of complete self-rule might take some time. In the meanwhile, analysts must process the process, in other words, interpret what is going on in the interaction of Catalan and Spanish politics, at numerous levels, and not simply in Barcelona and Madrid. This is the intention of the contributions to this dossier.