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The European Union’s Influence on Catalonia’s Immigration and Integration Policy

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Introduction

Rising levels of immigration in recent decades have raised significant identity-related questions in Western societies and challenged existing conceptions of national identity. Immigration poses particular challenges for “minority nations” like Catalonia, which for decades has struggled to promote its distinct language and national identity within the context of the Spanish state. Spain’s membership in the European Union creates further immigration challenges for Catalonia, due to the EU’s commitment to labour mobility and the free movement of European citizens among its member states.

Since the late-20th century, Catalonia’s political leaders have endeavoured to foster a civic conception of national identity, one that is open to immigration and cultural diversity but that maintains a common Catalan-speaking national community into which newcomers are expected to integrate. In this paper, I contend that Catalonia’s presence within the EU has helped encourage its political elites to conceptualize the Catalan nation as an open, immigrant-receiving society, whose future prosperity depends on its integration within the Union.¹ Nonetheless, recent economic challenges facing both Spain and the EU may be affecting this pro-European vision of Catalan national self-determination.

The paper begins with a discussion of my research methods and case selection, specifically, why Catalonia/Spain represents a fruitful case for understanding some of the complexities surrounding identity and political autonomy within present-day Europe. The following section focuses on the challenges facing “minority nations” like Catalonia in terms of

¹ This paper serves as a draft version of the third chapter of my doctoral dissertation on immigration politics and minority nationalism in Catalonia. The chapter is designed to provide an historical and contemporary overview of Catalonia’s efforts at articulating its own national model for immigration and integration, and the challenges it invariably faces as a self-governing minority nation within a recently democratized multinational state (Spain) that is itself part of a larger supra-national political/economic entity (the European Union).

their ability to control and influence immigration and integration policy within their societies.

The paper then examines how immigration in the Catalan context over time has become a multi-level phenomenon in which the Spanish state, the Catalan regional government (the Generalitat de Catalunya), local municipalities, and the European Union have been able to influence and shape the flow of immigrants into Catalonia as well as the settlement/integration policies and services available to immigrants.

Lastly, the paper discusses Catalonia's history as an immigrant-receiving region within Spain, and traces the evolution of its particular immigration/integration model. This historical overview explores how the development of this Catalan immigration/integration model has invariably been shaped by the region's ongoing struggle for national self-determination within the Spanish state, as well as by the wider process of European integration. In addition, the paper explores the effects of the post-2008 economic downturn on Catalonia, how it has altered the politics surrounding immigration and integration in the region, as well as negatively affected Catalonia's relationship with the Spanish state leading to calls for secession (with potential ramifications for Catalonia's future relationship with the EU).

Case selection and methods

My decision to conduct a case study of Catalonia reflects its importance as one of the oldest and politically significant minority nationalist movements in the Western world. It also reflects how Catalonia and Spain are presently at a pivotal moment in their relationship with one another and in their broader relationship to the European Union. Both Catalonia and Spain are facing a severe fiscal and economic crisis, with Madrid instituting a rigid austerity agenda as a

way of placating the concerns of European and international creditors. Spain's Popular Party, a conservative political party that has been and remains widely unpopular in Catalonia, introduced these austerity measures prompting a radicalization of Catalan nationalist discourse including calls for secession. While such centre-periphery tensions between minority nationalists and their larger states are common in other multinational contexts, the present divide between Catalan nationalists and Madrid, coupled with the tensions generated by the present economic crisis in Europe, are fostering a distinct (and possibly destructive) dynamic within the Catalonia-Spain relationship that deserves careful analysis in the years ahead.

From a research design standpoint, the paper draws on the "case study" methodological tradition. While case studies have traditionally been viewed with a degree of skepticism within modern social science, they can offer important in-depth empirical insights into a political phenomenon within a particular context that a more generalized cross-case comparative study could potentially overlook (see Eckstein, 1975; Collier, 1993). My decision to conduct a case study of Catalonia also reflects my own ontological perspective on the study of identity/nationalist politics, namely, that the complexity and dynamics of national identity-based debates are best studied from what Giovanni Sartori (1970) describes as a "low-level of abstraction", in which the contextual particularities of a case are emphasized. In this regard, a case study approach will allow me to examine this broader political phenomenon – a minority nation seeking greater political autonomy over immigration and integration matters – that is taking place within a particular historical-structural context (Catalonia's ongoing struggle for national self-determination within Spain and the influence of the European integration process on this struggle).

Minority nations and multinational states

Concepts such as the “nation”, “nationalism” and “nationalist movements”, and their relationship to wider political events and attitudes, all pose significant research challenges for social scientists. “Nationalism” and a person’s sense of “nationhood” or “national identity” are invariably subjective concepts, interpreted in different ways and expressed in a multitude of fashions. Consequently, the “nation” and similar subjective/identity-based terms have often been sources of intense methodological and theoretical debate in academia regarding how best to approach them as research topics and analytical concepts.

Certain earlier scholarly literature on nationalism tended to emphasize a close relationship between the concepts of “the nation” and “the state” (see Anderson 1983; Breuilly 1982; Gellner 1983), creating conceptual challenges in terms of analyzing states where a plurality of national identities exist such as Canada, Belgium and Spain. Related to this statist conception of the nation, was the idea that nations represented coherent, culturally homogeneous, and unifying sources of collective identity, which transcend, diminish or even obliterate existing identities and social/economic divisions. These earlier conceptions of national identity as relatively state-oriented, uniform, and fixed became problematic in light of recent scholarship on identity and nationalism. Rogers Brubaker (1996), for one, notes how established conceptions of the nation and other forms of “groupness” became increasingly “problematized” over the course of the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, recent literature has often challenged the idea that the “nation” represents the primary source of identification in today’s interconnected, mobile, and globalized world. This recent scholarship re-conceptualized the “nation” and “national identity” as dynamic or fluid concepts that are continuously contested and transformed by a multitude of competing and crosscutting identities and allegiances (both internal and external to the “nation”) (see

Maclure 2003; Tully 2008). These new conceptions of national identity have in turn influenced recent analysis of “multinational” societies such as Canada, Belgium and Spain, societies in which national identities are invariably complex, pluralized and contested.

Drawing on this recent literature, I conceptualize Catalonia in this paper as a “minority nation” existing within the larger Spanish state, in the same way that Quebec, Flanders and Scotland represent minority nations within Canada, Belgium and the United Kingdom, respectively. Minority nations are a complex and contested concept that have gained increasing scholarly and political attention in recent decades. As James Tully (2001) describes:

The members of (minority) nations are, or aspire to be, recognized as self-governing peoples with the right of self-determination as this is understood in international law and democratic theory. While some members of such a nation may seek to exercise their right of self-determination ‘externally’ – by secession and the formation of another independent single-nation state – other members mobilize to exercise their right of self-determination ‘internally’ – by the reconfiguration of the existing constitutional association so its multinational character is recognized and accommodated (p. 2-3)

Minority nations derive their sense of shared national identity from various social and political characteristics that are common to their particular national group, but that are in some ways distinct from the larger multinational state. These commonalities often include a shared culture and language, an earlier history of political autonomy, concentration within a defined territory, and a collective desire to maintain the group’s distinctiveness and identity into the future (McRoberts, 2003; Requejo, 2005).

Secondly, due to the presence of these minority nations within their borders, I conceptualize countries such as Spain, Canada, Belgium and the United Kingdom as “multinational democracies”, which “are contemporary societies composed not only of many

cultures (multicultural) but also of two or more nations (multinational)” (Tully, 2001, p. 1). The presence of these minority nations ensure that identities in multinational democracies are relatively complex, as “categories and identities overlap” and can coexist or compete with one another depending on the circumstances (Keating, 2001b, p. 45). As with the term “minority nation”, the term “multinational democracy” is not a neutral descriptive concept but a contested one. The idea that the Canadian, Spanish or Belgian nations are not coterminous with the boundaries of their respective states is controversial, one that has provoked intense and protracted political and constitutional debates within these societies.

Immigration and minority nationalism

Transnational migration patterns and the impact of immigrant communities on established conceptions of national identity in Western societies have served as a major focal point of scholarly analysis in recent decades. Many of these academic works have centred on the relationship between immigration and the citizenship models and national identities of sovereign states (see for example: Brubaker 1992; Soysal 1994; Joppke 2010). These same migration patterns, however, have also led to significant numbers of newcomers settling in regions characterized by minority nationalism such as Quebec, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Flanders and Scotland, raising important political questions for these minority nationalist movements in terms of how to respond to the evolving character and growing diversity of their societies.

Kymlicka (2001) notes that “[t]he relation between national minorities and immigrants has historically been fraught with tension” as “[l]arge-scale immigration has typically been seen as a threat to national minorities” (p. 67). This sense of threat is attributable to how immigrants

historically have tended to integrate into the *majority* language and culture of their adopted country as a means of securing social and economic mobility rather than the language and culture of national minorities, and that new immigrants can have difficulties in terms of identifying with (the often historically-rooted) struggles of minority nationalists for self-determination and cultural/linguistic survival (ibid).

In spite of the apparent tensions between the goals of minority nationalists and recent immigrants, many minority nationalist movements in the Global North in recent decades have attempted to reconcile their own nation-building projects with a greater openness towards immigration and cultural diversity. Keating and McGarry (2001) note how at the political level, minority nationalists have attempted to secure greater authority over “policy instruments in the fields of culture, economics, and immigration”, in order to control and shape the demographic changes taking within their societies (p. 7). At a broader societal level, various minority nationalist movements have attempted to re-define popular understandings of their nations as being inclusive and open to newcomers, while at the same time stressing key societal features that all members of the nation are expected to share in (generally a commitment to the minority national language and/or liberal democratic and pluralist values). Kymlicka (2001) notes how Québécois, Scottish and Catalan nationalism have all embraced these “liberal-inclusive conceptions of nationhood” in recent decades, a phenomenon he partly attributes to the growing demographic and economic dependence of these minority nations on immigration in terms of addressing declining birthrates and labour shortages within their respective societies (p. 71-72).

Immigration in Catalonia: a multi-level system

Immigration in the Catalan context is a complex multi-level phenomenon: a reflection of Catalonia's status as a self-governing constituent unit within the larger Spanish state, as well as Spain's status as a member state of the European Union. Officially, the primary actor in the field of immigration is the Government of Spain. Section 149(2) of Spain's 1978 Constitution bestows on the central government the "exclusive competence" over matters of "[n]ationality, immigration, emigration, status of aliens, and right of asylum". In spite of this position of authority and leadership, the approach of the Spanish government towards immigration and citizenship over the past thirty years has been largely reactive, in which Spanish immigration policy has principally been limited to "the control of (immigration) flows and the reduction of illegal immigrants" (Moreno & Colino, 2010, p. 312). Several scholars have remarked on the incoherence, ambiguity or pragmatism of Spanish immigration/integration policy during this time period, and attribute it to a variety of factors including: Spain's history as country of *emigration* rather than immigration prior to the 1990s;² the tensions that political debate surrounding immigration and national identity inevitably raise in the Spanish context in relation to older unsettled questions regarding the multinational character of the country; and lastly, the growing polarization between Spain's two main political parties in recent years over the subjects of immigration, citizenship and national identity (Davis, 2008; Kleiner-Liebau, 2009; Zapata-Barrero 2007 & 2012).

Despite the constitutional primacy of the Spanish government in realm of immigration, the municipal and regional levels of governments over time have also assumed important roles in

² Spain's accession to the European Community in 1986 and the economic growth the country experienced between this time and the 2008 economic crisis would attract significant numbers of immigrants to Spain from other EU member states and from the Global South, rapidly transforming Spain into a country of immigration.

the settlement and integration of immigrants to Spain. The municipal level's role is relatively constrained and relates to how recent immigrants to Spain must officially register themselves as residents of their local municipality in order to access education and health services (Moreno & Colino, 2010, p. 312). The role of the regional level of government, however, is more complicated and reflects that complex political system created in Spain following its transition to democracy. Specifically, the 1978 Constitution re-organized the previously unitary Spanish state into a quasi-federation³ composed of seventeen "autonomous communities" (the Spanish refer to this system of regional government as the "State of Autonomies"). To create this new regional level of government, the Spanish state devolved political power to each of the autonomous communities through "Statutes of Autonomy", which outline an autonomous community's political institutions and the powers and policy responsibilities that those institutions exercise.

While Catalonia's original 1979 Statute of Autonomy was largely silent on the subjects of immigration and integration (an issue that was later addressed in its revised 2006 Statute, as discussed below), it nonetheless granted the Generalitat authority over various social policies and services that immigrants regularly access and depend upon in their day-to-day lives. From a practical standpoint then, simply by virtue of their jurisdictional responsibilities, the Catalan Generalitat and the other autonomous community governments within Spain became regularly involved in the everyday settlement and integration experiences of immigrants living within their respective regions (although as the next section will discuss, the Generalitat's interest in immigrant settlement and integration within Catalan society has always extended beyond a practical interest in providing basic services to immigrants).

³ Whether Spain constitutes a full-fledged "federation" along the lines of Canada, Germany and Belgium, or simply a "devolved unitary state" akin to Italy or the United Kingdom is a source of debate.

Finally, at the supranational level, the European Union has increasingly influenced immigration/integration matters in the Catalan context ever since Spain acceded to what was then the European Community in 1986. The EU treaties affirm the right of “free movement” to all EU citizens among the Union’s member states, through the promotion of a common European “area of freedom, security and justice without internal borders” (Europa, n.d.). The concept of free movement has been progressively instituted since the 1985 Schengen Agreement in which certain member states agreed to abolish internal border controls “in lieu of a single external border” and in which “common rules and procedures are applied with regard to visas for short stays, asylum requests and border controls” (ibid). Spain (and by extension, Catalonia) became subject to these same provisions when it joined the “Schengen Area” in 1991.⁴ The Catalan Generalitat accordingly refers to the European Union as a “primary player” in relation to immigration and integration policy in the Catalan context, and notes that European institutions exercise “a central influence in determining the outlines of migration and asylum legislation and policies” (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2009, p. 44). The Generalitat also notes that in recent years both member state and regional governments have gradually been “displaced” by the EU in a range of policy areas and issues pertaining to immigration and integration, including, border controls and visas, asylum, protections for the rights of foreigners, and the control of illegal migration and human trafficking (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2009, pp. 44-45).

In summary, immigration and integration matters in the Catalan context, to varying degrees, involve four different levels of government, creating a level of complexity that can

⁴ The provisions of the Schengen Agreement have since been incorporated into the European Union legal framework through the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam.

severely constrain policy development.⁵ Nonetheless, Madrid's reticence or inability to articulate a coherent vision of Spanish immigration and citizenship in recent decades, has created an opening for the Catalan Generalitat and other autonomous community governments in Spain to attempt to overcome this intergovernmental complexity and articulate their own "regionally distinct conceptualizations of citizenship and inclusion" (Davis, 2008, p. 137). The following sections provide an overview of the Catalan Generalitat's efforts to develop their own immigration/integration model, and the challenges they have faced due to intergovernmental pressures from the Spanish and European levels.

Immigration and the evolution of Catalan nationalism and self-government

Catalonia's history as an immigrant receiving region of Spain

Migration has profoundly shaped the social and political character of Catalonia and Catalan nationalism for the past century. Ricard Zapata-Barrero (2007) characterizes Catalonia as "a nation created by immigration" (p. 181), while Desirée Kleiner-Liebau (2009) notes how contemporary Catalan political discourse continuously emphasizes the region's "history of immigrant reception and integration" as well as the "positive contributions" of immigrants to the development of a distinct and autonomous Catalan society (p. 181). This immigration tradition is largely attributable to Catalonia's history as a major industrial centre, which attracted significant numbers of migrants to the region from poorer, agrarian parts of Spain. Though the first major waves of migration from other parts of Spain to Catalonia began in the early decades

⁵ This intergovernmental complexity is officially recognized by the Catalan Generalitat, which explains that in the Catalan context, "[t]he legal system for foreigners is determined by various political and administrative levels with powers that in one way or another impact on immigration and the rights and duties of immigrants" (Generalitat, 2009, p. 43)

of the 20th century, they would reach their apex between 1950 and 1970 as 1.4 million Castilian-speaking migrants came to the region seeking employment (Greer, 2007, p. 96).

This period of migration during the mid-20th century coincided with the Franco dictatorship, when Catalan nationalism was declared a threat to the unity of the Spanish state and the public use of the Catalan language, cultural practices, and symbols of national identity were prohibited. The concern among many Catalans during this time was that the influx of Castilian-speakers from the rest of Spain coupled with the cultural repression of the Franco regime would either undermine Catalonia's national/linguistic distinctiveness, or create a social divide between the wealthier native Catalans and the relatively poorer recent "immigrant" population (Greer, 2007, p. 97). Debates regarding how to address this growing migrant population dominated Catalan political discourse for much of the mid-20th century (Balcells, 1996, pp. 152-155).

By the time of Spain's transition to democracy and the restoration of Catalan self-government during the mid- to late-1970s, the survival and promotion of the Catalan language were at the forefront of the region's political concerns, which meant addressing the region's significant Castilian-speaking minority. Accordingly, the restored Generalitat de Catalunya began to develop a distinct Catalan model of immigrant integration. This model has since grown and developed over the past thirty years in tandem with evolving nature of the Catalonia-Spain-EU relationship, in which three distinct historical phases are evident: Phase One (1980s to the mid-1990s) in which the Generalitat's primary focus was the integration of Castilian-speaking immigrants from the rest of Spain, and where the European Union played a minor role; Phase Two (mid-1990s to late-2000s) in which the Generalitat's primary focus was the integration of immigrants from outside of Spain, and where the European Union facilitated the influx of growing numbers of immigrants to Catalonia; and finally, Phase Three (late-2000s to the present)

in which the Catalan Generalitat has had to address an economic and fiscal crisis, decreased immigration levels, rising societal tensions, and increased emigration levels from Catalonia to wealthier part of the EU.

Phase One (1980s to the mid-1990s): “internal immigration” from the rest of Spain

Following the restoration of self-government, the Catalan Generalitat attempted to reconcile the region’s nationalist/autonomist political goals with the demographic diversity of Catalan society through the promotion of what many scholars characterize as a “liberal-inclusive”, “civic” and “pluralist” interpretation of Catalan nationalism and national identity in which language serves as the primary social bond (Conversi 1997; Keating 2001a; Kymlicka 2001). As Kleiner-Liebau (2009) explains, the “Catalan nation” came to be understood “as a civic nation with a strong cultural bias” whereby “membership is defined in political discourse not by means of ethnic origin, but by means of civic elements and language knowledge” (p. 218).⁶ The concept of “linguistic normalization”, whereby the Castilian-speaking migrant population would be “normalized” into the Catalan-speaking society, served as the centre-piece of this integrationist agenda and was implemented through various educational and social policies designed to encourage the learning and use of the Catalan language in everyday life. As Keating (2001a) explains, the policy of “linguistic normalization was intended to make Catalan the normal language of communication in Catalonia but not to enhance ethnic differences and status distinctions between Catalans and non-Catalans”, and therefore “reflected a conscious decision in political circles in Catalonia to emphasize a civic and territorial rather than an ethnic

⁶ Keating (2001a) similarly notes the relative openness of the Catalan nation, in that “[t]he principal entry requirement to the Catalan community is learning the language and nearly all elements of the nationalist movement emphasise the need to assimilate incomers rather than maintaining an ethnic differentiation” (p. 198).

nationalism” (pp. 166-167). In this respect, Catalan nationalist objectives regarding immigration and linguistic normalization were similar to the language policy goals of modern Québécois nationalism, in that as Keating (2001a) notes “the Catalan project aims to use language to secure and enhance national identity and to integrate immigrants [...] while maintaining (Catalonia’s) social cohesion and cultural distinctiveness” (p. 166).

This phase covering the emergence and initial development of the Catalan immigration/integration model coincided with Spain’s accession to the European Community in 1986 and its subsequent integration into what would become the European Union. At the time, the EC/EU had limited influence on immigration patterns and politics in the region as the flow of immigrants to Catalonia and Spain from the rest of the EU remained relatively low, and as the Catalan Generalitat focused on integrating the region’s Castilian-speaking migrant population from the rest of Spain. Nonetheless, a general pro-European consensus began to emerge at this time among both the Catalan population and the region’s major political parties, which was supportive of Spain’s integration into Europe and envisioned a greater role for Catalonia and other regional actors in the European decision-making process (Nagel, 2004, pp. 61-62)⁷

Phase Two (mid-1990s to late-2000s): “external immigration” from the EU and the Global South

Spain’s transition to an immigrant-receiving country during the 1990s and 2000s raised new challenges for the Catalan Generalitat and Catalan nationalism. Over the course of the 1990s the proportion of new immigrants to the region from the rest of Spain dropped

⁷ Nagel (2004) notes how “[t]o be European (and more European than the Spaniards) has always been one of the distinctive marks of Catalanism”, and that “[m]ost Catalans still pride themselves on possessing a high grade of Europeanness, even ahead of the Spaniards” (p. 61).

significantly relative to proportion of new immigrants from outside of Spain. This new wave of immigration was spurred by a number of factors, including, Catalonia's economic growth during the 1990s and 2000s in which it emerged as one of the wealthiest regions in the EU, as well as labour shortages in rapidly growing sectors of the Catalan economy (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2009, p. 13). To respond to these changes in immigration patterns, the Catalan Generalitat "transposed" the various programs and policies that had been developed to integrate the Castilian-speaking migrant population towards integrating the new wave of immigrants from abroad (Davis, 2008, p. 151). New government departments and official plans were also created by the Generalitat over the course of the 1990s, including the Interdepartmental Commission for the Monitoring and the Coordination of Action with Regard to Immigration and the First Interdepartmental Plan for Immigration (1993-2000) in order to facilitate the integration of these newcomers within Catalan society.

By the turn of the millennium, immigrants from outside of Spain accounted for the vast majority of Catalonia's population growth (Zapata-Barrero, 2007, p. 184). The rising levels of immigration to the region and the growing social diversity that it engendered, prompted the Catalan Generalitat to attempt to assume greater authority over the fields of immigration and integration so as to better control the flow of newcomers into the region (ibid, pp. 184-185). These efforts led the creation of the Catalan Secretariat for Immigration, as well as the passage of the Second Interdepartmental Plan for Immigration (2001-04) and the Citizenship and Immigration Plan (2005-08). The Generalitat was less successful, however, in its proposal for broader constitutional reform whereby immigration would be turned into an area of "shared competency" between the Spanish and Catalan governments, as well as its efforts to create overseas immigration offices designed to facilitate the flow of skilled labour into Catalonia.

Both of these initiatives were ultimately obstructed by the Spanish government, which regarded the Generalitat's efforts as an unwarranted intrusion into a policy area in which Madrid exercised exclusive constitutional authority (Davis, 2009, pp. 433-434).

These disagreements between the Generalitat and the Spanish government over immigration matters were symptomatic of broader tensions between the Catalans and Madrid over the constitutional evolution of the Spanish state. By the beginning of the 21st century, the two sides had reached an impasse over the future direction of the country and its national character, with the central government stressing symmetrical devolution and the constitutional status quo, and the Catalans calling for far-reaching constitutional reform. Catalonia's reform efforts ultimately culminated in the passage of a revised Statute of Autonomy for the region in 2006 designed to "increase the symbolic and political recognition of Catalonia as a distinct national reality within the Spanish state" (Requejo, 2010, p. 159).

The negotiations surrounding the 2006 Statute also represented a renewed attempt by Catalonia to assume greater authority over immigration and integration matters. The final version of the 2006 Statute explicitly recognizes the internal diversity of Catalan society and its history as an immigrant-receiving region,⁸ as well as includes an entire section (Section 138) devoted to the authority of the Catalan Generalitat in immigration and integration matters (making it the first Statute of Autonomy in Spanish history to discuss the authority of an autonomous community government in the field of immigration) (Davis, 2008, p. 147). Specifically, Section 138 grants the Generalitat exclusive authority in the reception and integration of immigrants to Catalonia, as well as executive authority in the provision of work

⁸ The Preamble to the 2006 Statute's begins by emphasizing how "Catalonia has been shaped over the course of time through the contribution of the energy of many generations, traditions and cultures, which found in Catalonia a land of welcome" (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2006a).

permits to foreign workers in the region (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2006b). While Section 138 (and the 2006 Statute in general) abides by the language of the 1978 Constitution and therefore does not explicitly challenge the exclusive authority of the Spanish government in the realm of immigration, it was nonetheless significant in terms of explicitly outlining what had previously been an ambiguous role for the Catalan Generalitat regarding the social integration of newcomers within their society.

This second phase, in which the Catalan immigration/integration model continued to grow and develop in response to the region's rising immigration levels and social diversity, also coincided with the European Union assuming an increasingly prominent role in Catalan public life (both in relation to immigration and to the region's nationalist self-determination aspirations). Beginning in the 1990s, immigration from other EU member states began to make up a significant proportion of the new wave of external immigration to Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2009, p. 17). The countries of origin for these EU immigrants varied significantly, with many coming from Western European member states such as France, Germany, Italy and the UK, but with significant growth in recent years from the new Eastern European member states (ibid, p. 18). Indeed, the eastward expansion of the EU during the mid-2000s was followed by significant increases in the number of EU immigrants settling in Catalonia, with the Generalitat (2009) reporting a noticeable increase after Romania and Bulgaria's accession to the Union in 2007 (p. 37).⁹

⁹ It should be noted that immigration from Latin American countries (in particular, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Argentina and Bolivia) in total consistently outnumbered EU immigration over the past decade. This is significant in that even though the number of Castilian-speaking migrants from the rest of Spain settling in Catalonia has dropped substantially in recent years, the number of Castilian-speakers from Latin America settling in Catalonia has consistently grown creating the same potential challenges for Catalan authorities in terms of the preservation and promotion of the Catalan language in public life (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2009)

During the same period, the Catalan Generalitat has consistently supported Spain's further integration into both the EU and the Eurozone, as well as attempted to address the region's limited influence at the European level. During this time, the Catalans openly supported treaty reforms designed to increase regional government representation in EU institutions (Keating, 2000; Guibernau, 2006), and have attempted to improve Generalitat-EU relations by establishing an official Catalan delegation within Brussels. These efforts, however, were largely unsuccessful in terms of redressing the imbalance between member-state government influence and regional government influence at the European level. Nonetheless, pro-European attitudes among Catalans persisted, and indeed were perhaps strengthened by the growing political discord between Catalonia and Spain during this time, which fostered a sense among Catalans that Europe represented "a neutral political space" compared to Spain, one that was "less hostile to their aspirations" (Keating, 2001a, p. 34).

Phase Three (late-2000s to the present): Economic downturn, emigration and social discord

The 2006 Statute of Autonomy's clearer articulation of Catalonia's authority in the immigration/integration field subsequently motivated various Catalan political and civil society actors to develop a new "national consensus" on immigration and integration matters that would guide the region in the years to come. These efforts culminated in a 2008 multi-partite accord entitled, *An Agreement to live Together: National Agreement on Immigration*. Thirty-two Catalan organizations, political parties and interest groups signed this agreement in Barcelona on December 19, 2008, after months of public consultation, research and negotiations (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2008, p. 5). The drafters characterized the agreement as representing the most

recent stage in Catalonia's decades-long effort at fostering a welcoming and supportive national community for newcomers to the region (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2008, p. 7). A broad range of policy concerns were addressed in the text of the Agreement, including: "management of migratory flows and access to the job market"; "adapting public services to a diverse society" through the creation of a "universal admission service"; as well as "integration (of newcomers) in a common public culture" through such measures as:

(E)ncouraging participation in public life; making Catalan the common public language; living together among a plurality of beliefs; ensuring equal opportunities between men and women; incorporating the gender perspective; and strengthening policies aimed at children, young people, the elderly and families (Generalitat, 2008, p. 7)

The scope of Catalonia's 2008 *National Agreement on Immigration* was far-reaching and was designed to guide Catalonia's ongoing development as an open, pluralistic immigrant-receiving society for the next twenty years.¹⁰ What the drafters of the Agreement could not predict, however, was the effects of the global economic downturn that began in the months immediately preceding its passage, in particular, the sovereign debt crises that have affected various EU member states including Spain. In the years that followed, Spain and Catalonia entered a period of economic and fiscal uncertainty as unemployment and public debt levels rose, prompting the Spanish government to institute highly controversial austerity measures to rein in public spending and reassure European and international creditors.

A new phase therefore had begun in Catalonia's history as an immigrant-receiving region, one that is increasingly in tension with the liberal-inclusive spirit of the Catalan "model" of immigration and integration, and particularly the principles of openness and diversity articulated in the 2008 *National Agreement on Immigration*. By the early 2010s, the impact of

¹⁰ Indeed, in 2009, the Generalitat approved the *Citizenship and Immigration Plan 2009-2012*, which was designed to "implement the measures and actions envisaged in the Agreement" (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2009, p. 7).

the economic crisis became evident in the demographic trends and political discourse surrounding immigration in Catalonia. A 2012 report commissioned to assess the long-term impact of the *National Agreement on Immigration* found that immigration levels to Catalonia had decreased substantially in the wake of the economic crisis, while emigration levels had increased as both recent immigrants and native-born Catalans began to leave the region to seek economic opportunities elsewhere (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012, pp. 1-2). The report also noted growing signs of negative and discriminatory attitudes within Catalan society towards immigrants, which threatened to undermine the *National Agreement on Immigration*'s goals of fostering an atmosphere of openness and coexistence among all Catalans (ibid, p. 2).

This new immigration reality was further reflected in the Generalitat's recently released *Citizenship and Migration Plan: Horizon 2016* whose over-riding themes and policy concerns reflect the various demographic and political uncertainties facing present-day Catalonia. Some of the challenges cited in the Plan include the difficulties of integrating immigrants during a time of economic and fiscal crisis, the growing socio-economic gap between the immigrant and native-born segments of the Catalan population (especially immigrant youth), the need to combat discrimination and xenophobia and to foster an open and accepting Catalan public culture, and the need to re-envision Catalan migration policy as a "two-way" process that encompasses both immigration and emigration (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2014a).

One final important factor that has shaped this present phase is Catalonia's uncertain future within the Spanish state. The Eurozone debt crisis, the Spanish economic downturn and Madrid's adoption of fiscal austerity has taken Catalan-Spanish relations to its lowest point in decades. Resentment towards the Spanish government has risen substantially in recent years as

have calls for independence. As a consequence, the Generalitat recently set a referendum date for November 9, 2014, in which Catalan voters will be asked the following two-part question:

“Do you want Catalonia to become a State?” and, in case of an affirmative response, “Do you want this State to be independent? Yes or No.” (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2013)¹¹

Questions surrounding secession have therefore come to dominate all aspects of Catalan political discourse in recent years. The *Citizenship and Migration Plan: Horizon 2016*, for instance, emphasizes the need to situate Catalonia’s strategy towards immigration within this particular period of “national transition” in which Catalans are considering the prospects of independence from the Spanish state (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2014a). The Plan further suggests that the public debate surrounding Catalan self-determination can be seen as a “unique opportunity to strengthen social cohesion” among all Catalans (both immigrants and native-born), and therefore encourages that all segments of Catalan society be able to participate in the decision-making processes surrounding Catalonia’s future relationship with Spain (ibid).

The present phase has also coincided with significant changes to the Catalonia-EU relationship in regards to both immigration and national self-determination. The first change is how European integration has become a contributing factor in Catalonia’s sudden transition into an emigrant-producing region after so many years of rapid population growth due to immigration from abroad. Factors that once supported Catalonia’s status as an immigrant-receiving region, namely its integration within the European Union and the ease of mobility between member

¹¹ The Spanish government has called the proposed Catalan referendum unconstitutional and the Spanish Parliament recently voted against a request by Catalan legislators to grant the region the authority to hold the referendum. In spite of this opposition, the Catalan President Artur Mas has pledged to find alternative means that would allow Catalonia to proceed with the referendum in November, 2014 (Mas, 2014).

states that the EU fosters, are now working in reverse as growing numbers of Catalans are exercising their right of free movement as EU citizens to leave Catalonia and seek economic opportunities in other more prosperous parts of the European Union. Indeed, a recent report noted that since 2009 emigration levels from Catalonia have grown 8 to 9 per cent per year, and that by 2013 over 200,000 Catalans were living abroad, mostly in other EU member states but also in Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela and the U.S. (CIDOB, 2013, p. 4). As a consequence of these rising emigration levels, the *Citizenship and Immigration Plan: Horizon 2016* predicts that Catalonia will likely experience limited population growth for the near future, and recommends that the Generalitat develop policies designed to maintain connections between Catalonia and the growing number of Catalans living and working abroad (Generalitat, 2014a).

The second change relates to Catalonia's potential secession from Spain and the impact it might have on the region's relationship with the EU. The Spanish government contends that if a constituent unit secedes from an EU member state, the terms of the EU treaties no longer apply to the seceding unit, which would then have to apply for official membership along the same lines as other EU applicant states. The Catalan Generalitat and the main nationalist parties in the region have rejected this claim, arguing that the EU would not force Catalonia out should they secede from Spain. The Generalitat (2013) describes the threat of Catalonia's expulsion from the Union as a scare tactic on the part of the Spanish government, designed to deter Catalans from voting for independence. Further, one of Catalonia major nationalist parties stresses that there are no formal rules regarding secession from an EU member state, and contend that it would be in the economic and political interests of the both the EU and Spain to keep Catalonia in the Union (ERC 2013).

Conclusion

Since the restoration of self-government in the late-1970s, Catalonia has gradually developed its own distinct immigration/integration model informed by an open and inclusive vision of the Catalan nation in which cultural diversity is respected yet the primacy of the Catalan language remains paramount. The model has experienced various pressures over time as it has responded to the challenges of integrating Catalonia's Castilian-speaking migrant population during the 1980s, as well as the region's increasingly diverse foreign born immigrant population during the 1990s and 2000s. Throughout this time, however, the emphasis of the Catalan Generalitat has remained on fostering an inclusive and welcoming Catalan society, an emphasis that has persisted even in the present phase of economic downturn, rising emigration levels and signs of growing social discord.

The Catalan immigration/integration model, however, is also a product of the Spanish system of multi-level governance. Consequently, immigration and integration matters in the Catalan context are located at a complex intersection between four different levels of government, each possessing varying degrees of influence and articulating distinct and occasionally conflicting policy interests and political agendas. The Generalitat's efforts to promote an inclusive vision of Catalan minority nationalism therefore has been continually influenced and shaped by intergovernmental pressures from these other levels. In particular, the European level has been an increasingly influential factor in the immigration dynamics at play in Catalan society. Beyond the European Union's active involvement in various policy areas that have direct bearing on immigration and integration matters in the Spanish and Catalan contexts, (including asylum policy, border controls, visas, and control of illegal migration), the EU's emphasis on free movement and mobility among its member states has also fostered an

atmosphere of openness and fluidity to Catalan life, in which EU citizens are able to enter and exit the region with limited restriction. The evolution of the Catalan immigration/integration model (at least since the 1990s) has in part been shaped by this open atmosphere, as the Catalan Generalitat has had to adapt its integration programs and services to rising immigration levels (of which other EU countries were major contributors) and an increasingly diverse population over the course the 1990s and 2000s, and more recently as the Generalitat has had to adapt to rising emigration levels as Catalans increasingly leave the region for economic opportunities in other parts of the European Union. In spite of this changeable relationship whereby Catalonia has both benefitted and suffered demographically from its integration in the European Union, the attitudes of Catalans towards the EU and of European integration have remained generally positive.

Ongoing tensions between the Catalan Generalitat and the Spanish government, however, may alter the future relationship between Catalonia and the EU, whereby the possibility of Catalan secession from Spain may also entail their expulsion from the Union. While the Catalan Generalitat has attempted to frame the debate regarding the “national transition” of Catalonia towards independence as a means of fostering social cohesion among all Catalans, the potential costs of independence (including expulsion from the EU) could easily dominate any public debate on secession and divide the Catalan electorate. At present, both Catalonia’s secession from Spain and its expulsion from the EU are hypothetical scenarios and there is a likely possibility that the Catalan Generalitat will not be able to proceed with its proposed referendum in November. Nonetheless the debate surrounding national self-determination continues to dominate Catalan political life with potentially significant implications for Catalan nationalism, its relationship with the EU, and the ongoing evolution of the Catalan immigration/integration model.

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