The Basque and Catalan questions since 1980
Teaching Nationalism and Conflict in Spain

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ABSTRACT

Our contemporary age is one where national identity retains important salience which can partly facilitate explanation. Teaching the Basque and Catalan questions since 1980 to British university students poses a number of challenges to educators. Themes that emerge in teaching about these political conflicts in Spain include state violence, terrorism, nationalism and social movements, minority languages and immigration. Some issues are more complex than others to consider particularly those around political violence and terrorism. However potentially sensitive material does not mean it cannot be tackled. This was a course that sought to demonstrate that questions of identity are contingent and continually subject to re-creation and re-interpretation. The goal of university education should be to explain why these disputes and their causation are contested and inseparable from historically inflected political framing.

Keywords: Pedagogy. Nationalism. Catalonia. Basque Country. Social Movements

RESUMEN

En nuestra época contemporània, la identidad nacional conserva una importante preeminencia que puede facilitar, en parte, la docencia. Enseñar las cuestiones vasca y catalana, desde 1980, a estudiantes universitarios británicos, plantea una serie de retos a los educadores. Los temas que emergen en la enseñanza de estos conflictos políticos en España incluyen la violencia estatal, el terrorismo, el nacionalismo y los movimientos sociales, las lenguas minoritarias y la inmigración. Algunos temas son más complejos que otros para considerar, particularmente aquellos relacionados con la violencia política y el terrorismo. Sin embargo, el material potencialmente sensible no significa que no se pueda abordar. Este fue un curso que buscó demostrar que las cuestiones de identidad son contingentes y continuamente sujetas a recreación y reinterpretación. El objetivo de la educación universitaria debería ser explicar por qué estas disputas y sus causas son cuestionadas e inseparables del marco político históricamente modificado.

Palabras clave: Pedagogía. Nacionalismo. Cataluña. País Vasco. Movimientos sociales

RESUM

La nostra època contemporània és aquella en què la identitat nacional conserva una importància important que en part pot facilitar l'explicació. Ensenyar la qüestió basca i catalana des de 1980 a estudiants universitaris britànics planteja una sèrie de reptes per als educadors. Els temes que sorgeixen en l'ensenyament sobre aquests conflictes polítics a Espanya inclouen la violència d'estat, el terrorisme, el nacionalisme i els moviments socials, les llengües minoritàries i la immigració. Algunes qüestions són més complexes que d'altres a tenir en compte, especialment les que envolten la violència política i el terrorisme. Tanmateix, el material potencialment sensible no vol dir que no es pugui abordar. Aquest va ser un curs que pretenia demostrar que les qüestions d'identitat són contingents i subjectes contínuament a la recreació i la reinterpretació. L'objectiu de l'educació universitària hauria de ser explicar per què aquestes disputes i la seva causa són impugnades i inseparables de l'enquadrament polític històricament flexionat.

Paraules clau: Pedagogia. Nacionalisme. Catalunya. País Basc. Moviments socials

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Beginning with the most violent years of the ETA campaign (1977-1981) and concluding in the period 2017 to 2019 in Catalonia, teaching about the Basque and Catalan questions to British students contain issues that are complex, emotionally charged and still unresolved. Features which range from state violence to terrorism, nationalism and social movements, minority languages and immigration, produce a number of challenges. Simplistic narratives must be avoided, to ensure that students understand causation in political conflict. Yet no course

examining these questions can begin without contextualisation. This can be important to avoid an excessive presentism which prevents deeper understanding.[1] The contemporary interpretation given to nationalism means that if we are to explain how these movements emerged, we need to give students historical and theoretical context to assess them. This is important because of course many Basques and Catalans have transmitted a distinctive historical memory, as have people both internal to those territories with different identity narratives and those in the rest of Spain. Furthermore we are dealing with political problems that are ongoing and attract highly partisan interventions across Spanish society. Therefore, the goals of university education should be to explain why these disputes and their causation are contested and inseparable from historically inflected political framing. These issues raise both affective and theoretical challenges to the classroom.[2]

I am a contemporary historian of Spain whose academic work has mostly focussed on Catalonia and whose approach relies on a combination of contemporary history and political sociology. The final year students I teach have a range of skill sets but all have spent at least a semester in Spain as part of their year abroad. This means Spanish language resources can be used throughout the teaching. This is particularly important as this gives students access to Spanish language podcasts and talks uploaded onto platforms such as YouTube. Whilst it is possible to assume a reasonable degree of familiarity with Spain, the depth of historical insight students bring to class is much more varied. It is not possible to assume students know much about the experience of Basques and Catalans under the Franco regime or indeed much about the historical periods before. Names familiar in Spain such as Jordi Pujol and Xabier Arzalluz are new to the vast majority of British students I teach. Equally, political acronyms such as ERC and the PNV are rarely familiar. At best British students only have rudimentary knowledge of the Basque and Catalan questions. Thus the initial classes by necessity provide a brief survey of post-1939 movements and also the development of Spanish nationalism. It has been a conscious choice on my part to situate these movements within a broader Spanish context. The first two weeks are also devoted to theoretical approaches from nationalism. This is the most intellectually challenging aspect of the course as students bring to the classroom pre-conceived and untheorized observations on categories such as the nation and identity. This theoretical grounding is however essential if students are to make meaningful interventions on the topics we are considering. We parse out the differences between a state supported nationalism such as the Spanish variant and those that emerged at least in part response to it. I dedicate the remaining weeks to a consideration of the major themes and questions. Among these are ETA and GAL violence, violent and peaceful nationalism, protest and revolt, legitimacy and the

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[1] Toplak et.al (2007]

[2] McCully et.al. (2022]

Spanish Constitution, language issues and the right to self-determination. The course ends with consideration of the events in Catalonia in 2017, what they represented and what predictions, if any, we can make for the following years.

In the introductory section then, we closely consider the main theoretical explanations for nationalism. We briefly consider the three main perspectives operating in the discipline of nationalism: primordialism, modernism and constructivism. Debate and discussion centred on the persistence of nationalism as an ideology that mobilizes populations, considering contributions from Anthony Smith, John Breuilly, Benedict Anderson and Umut Özkirmli.[3] The exact forms of the modern nation and their by-products: nationalism, chauvinism and patriotism will be disentangled. We also consider Billig's Banal Nationalism as being particularly useful to consider state nationalism in its everyday manifestations.[4] Subregional national units and their identity forms can thus be contrasted with great state nationalism. We soon see that the Basques and Catalans are often referred to as the only nationalists in Spain whilst Spanish nationalism is normalised and omnipresent. We conclude by examining the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism and the utility of this distinction when applied to nationalist questions in Spain. In the small group teaching context, we discuss how each nationalist theory does or does not shed light on Basque, Catalan and Spanish nationalism. In these sessions students discover that there are major theoretical differences evident in the scholarly literature and that historical accounts include those written to praise or denigrate different national formations within Spain. These materials provide students with the opportunity to engage in authentic learning.[5] Students soon realise that issues around identity, around language and symbols, Spanish nationhood and resistance to it, form part of the everyday political and media debates in Spain.

Students today have some awareness of these themes as recent years has seen high media profile given to the resurgence of populism, which nearly always articulates a strong nationalist narrative. Though these issues are helpful to understanding the contemporary salience of nationalism, it is also necessary to consider the differences in the political articulation of Trump and Bolsonaro compared to the policy platform of the Scottish National Party for example. The populist surge then is used as a teaching mechanism to more deeply interrogate differences in national movements and how theorists have been unable to provide a universally applicable theory of the nation. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has placed the framing of historical justification as a central source of explanation with Russian assertions around the artificial nature of Ukrainian nationhood providing an opportunity to consider how history is a contested terrain. We see how aca-

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[3] Smith (1986 and 1988]; Breuilly (1993]; Anderson (1991] and Özkirmli (2010]
[4] Billig (1995]
[5] Gilbert (2021]

demic disciplines such as history and the social science can be utilised for concrete political objectives. The question of Brexit and British national identity and the ongoing shifts in northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland means that students can often find local parallels to aid understanding. We use these examples to better comprehend Spanish, Basque and Catalan accounts of their history and historical justification for their claims of nationhood. By situating these movements within a social science literature combined with contemporary historical analysis, we understand how meaning and identity are socially constructed. By encountering the complexity of political thought and conceptions we can also avoid dogmatism.[6] We also find that nationalist movements are not static phenomena and instead engage in major ideological recategorization and that this process is ongoing. A useful example here is how Protestantism was once central to British identity yet today it barely figures as an ideological component.[7]

I teach at a Welsh university which gives an added layer to these questions. Cardiff University attracts a social mix of students from England and Wales and questions around Basques/Catalans etc can be partly framed through similar issues existing within the United Kingdom. Most English students have little or no knowledge of Welsh or Scottish history. Many English students are puzzled that most Welsh students want England to lose in sporting competition against any other opponent. Like elsewhere, the teaching of history in school has been a battleground with a strong push from British Conservative governments since 2010 for students to have a positive view of British history, including in its imperial phase. The teaching of history has become a central battleground in how the nation should be framed.[8] School curriculums are increasingly closely controlled from central government and a powerful tabloid press is quick to seize on any examples of un-patriotic teaching practices. Teaching in a Welsh University where a majority of students are English but a substantial minority are of Welsh origin provides ample opportunity to consider questions of national identity and majoritarian/minoritarian contexts. Where awareness of some kind of persecution is held by one grouping, careful handling may be required.[9] Welsh and English students I teach have differing conceptions of historical memory and we are able to tease out these issues when we consider Spain. This is particularly useful when we consider the Catalan push for independence as the movement has broadly coincided with developments in Scotland. A referendum agreed by the British state in 2014 was rejected by Spain in 2017, whilst in late 2022 the British legal authorities rejected the demand for a second Scottish referendum. Therefore at the same when I was teaching, the Scottish independence issue re-surfaced with great salience. Thus issues around nation and identity, secession and self-

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[6] Johnson (2008).
[7] Colley (2005).
[8] Osler (2009).
[9] Farnham (2020).

determination, authority and legality are actually questions that my students at Cardiff have some concrete awareness of.

Teaching political violence

More complex is the issue of ETA and political violence. None remember the period of IRA violence which ended in the late 1990s and the cycle of international terrorism that began post 2001 has dramatically abated in recent years. Thus students have little awareness of justifications for political violence and the last terrorist attack in the United Kingdom was minor in scale and was in 2017 when my students were 15 or 16. When made aware of it, students were generally appalled by the substantiated allegations of torture in the Basque Country and the para-state activities of the GAL.[10] Inevitably discussions around torture and violence are emotionally charged but overall it was clear that most students have a strong moral framework in which to address these issues. Students felt it was essential that democratic societies preserve their political principles in spite of violent threats and were deeply hostile to incarceration without trial and state use of torture to defeat violent opponents. Perhaps because they are a cohort impacted by Black Lives Matter and #metoo protests, many of my students are now much more critical of the police and this was evident in discussion around Spanish police actions on 1 October 2017 in Catalonia. On political violence itself we considered issues related to legitimate targets and discussion broadened to include actions by states including Russian actions in Ukraine. Discussion of legitimacy and definitions were wide-ranging, extending the French resistance in the Second World War, all sides in the northern Irish conflict, the PLO to Al-Qaeda. There is little or no sympathy for the ETA campaign of violence that continued into the contemporary period, with most students feeling that the Spanish democratic settlement of the mid to late 1970s provided an opportunity to express most Basque aspirations.[11] Even so, terrorism is famously hard to define objectively and is usually a term framed by and applied by political opponents. It is a slippery concept and it was necessary to understand the social support that exists in society to enable expressions of political violence, which can be often harsh and brutal in their expression. It is not possible to provide fully graphic accounts of the devastation caused by a car bomb or the dehumanising that takes place in all violent conflicts but it is important that students comprehend how suffering impacts on political positions and the willingness to compromise on deeply held belief systems. Whilst this is a complex topic, I have found that students are willing to engage with all of the main aspects raised by political violence and that simply demonising a political opponent is an ineffective way to address or consider the reasons why there are those willing to take up arms to further their political objectives. By considering the full impact of violence in Basque

[10] Woodworth (2001 and 2005]
[11] Lecours (2007] and Mansvelt-Beck (2005]

society, we are also able to understand how post-2008, the Basque Country, developing and consolidating a post-conflict political culture, was able to build a broader narrative of social consensus around questions of political change.

Teaching the Basque question to British students

In the following sections I outline the main points I believe are essential to communicate in understanding the themes of Basque, Catalan and Spanish nationalism as taught to British students. The historically formed discourse of resistance that prevails within the Basque nationalist movement evokes an ancient culture that has been preserved through the ages, citing the apparent failure of Roman, Visigoth and Arab and other invaders to overcome them. For its supporters, ETA was the latest in a long line of expressions of resistance to centralising and homogenising trends that have been led by Madrid. In the post-1975 period, as Spain moved from dictatorial regime to liberal democracy, ETA's violence escalated. Police, military and security service frustration at ETA's continued activity led to increased shoot-to-kill policies and rogue elements within the security services to assassinate ETA members as the action-reaction-action spiral reached new heights. Significantly, 80% of ETA's victims took place after the death of Franco in 1975. What became known as the 'dirty war' continued into democracy and had long-lasting implications for the continuation of ETA's campaign of violence. Whilst electoral politics and amnesties for political prisoners seemed to satisfy the wider Spanish opposition in the transition years, the Basque Country was the most violent territory in western Europe after Northern Ireland. Whilst Spain was engaged in the construction of a new democratic polity, extra-judicial killings of protesters and suspected ETA members enabled ETA to argue that 'nothing had changed' in its fundamentals and that Spain remained the source of Basque oppression. Thus students need to understand that ETA did not recognise any of the reforms introduced in Spain post-Franco and instead claimed that fascism had been adapted to new times.

ETA's continued violence against the security forces in the post-Franco caused the threat of military coups to loom and threatened the consolidation of the democratic system in Spain. The wider deterioration was made worse by the ever-increasing economic crisis that hit Basque territory as de-industrialisation and rocketing unemployment, including very high youth unemployment, accentuated social conflict. The creation of a Basque autonomous parliament did little to stem the tide of violence and it was a process that was more fraught than anywhere else in Spain. The question of Navarre and its exclusion from the process was a major source of grievance in radical nationalist sectors. It is here that it is often a good place to consider the question of national territory and its centrality in nationalist narratives. The PNV re-emerged post-1975 as the dominant political force, obtaining between post 1980 figures that oscillated from between 20-35% of

the Basque electorate. Students are taught about the broader Basque nationalist family, in its radical and mainstream variants. The PNV became increasingly exasperated at the continued violence into the 1980s and beyond whilst a culture of suffering ensured a closing of ranks in the radical world. Though smaller, a hardened and battle-scarred ETA remained. As a consequence of its reduced military capacity, ETA increasingly came to use car bombs from the mid-1980s, often leading to civilian casualties through garbled or unheeded warnings. By the 1990s, political representatives of both major Spanish parties, the PSOE and the PP, were also increasingly killed. ETA, through the assassination of soft targets such as politicians, remained a central actor in the politics of Spain throughout the decade. Its base of support markedly declined, though a significant sector of Basque society of between 10–15 percent was prepared to support political organizations which justified the armed struggle. As peace negotiations faltered in the 1990s, Spanish judicial authorities extended their prosecutions to radical political sectors and closed newspapers, cultural organizations, and any believed to be part of the "ETA world." This process culminated in the banning of political organizations that do not explicitly condemn violence. Here we note how the British government never prohibited Sinn Féin though did subject the organisation to a number of restrictive measures. Proscriptions, arrests, and imprisonments by the Spanish authorities partly contributed to the continuation of ETA in the first decade of the twenty-first century, with radical Basque political culture feeling itself to be under assault. In part influenced by the Irish peace process of the early 1990s and the position of the IRA, ETA declared an end to military hostilities in September 1998 though it would be close to a decade later until this was permanent. We examine contemporary Basque society as one in a post-conflict situation with much greater societal awareness of the terrible cost played by violence and repression. We also assess what utility, if any, the campaign of violence had over the decades.

Teaching the Catalan question to British students

The Catalan question, with varying degrees of intensity, has remained central to the politics of democratic Spain since the end of the Franco dictatorship. Catalan autonomy was restored in 1979 and the first elections to its parliament took place in 1980. Victory went to conservative Catalanism and the left, which had been dominant under Francoism, was defeated. It seemed that Catalonia was embarking on a new direction, with autonomy re-established, and self-confidence restored in a Spain that was seeking to build a new democracy. Furthermore, the cultural and linguistic destruction of a long-lasting dictatorship determined that political priorities should be centred on Catalonia. Whilst the Catalan regional government could never ignore developments in Madrid, it sought to craft a new political culture from Barcelona. Whilst for most commentators, the transition to democracy in Spain is seen to have ended with the landslide victory of the Spa-

nish socialists in November 1982, for Catalonia, March 1980 marks a new moment in its contemporary development.

For most of the period from 1980 to 2005, the Catalan question seemed to be resolvable within the contours of Spain's semi-federal autonomous regime. Spain was often invoked internationally as having achieved success in addressing its sub-national minorities. As late as 2005 fewer than 15 per cent of Catalans expressed support for the independence of the country. Yet in contrast to the views held in much of Spanish political culture that the emergence of the new semi-federal regime marked a dramatic overhaul of the Spanish political system, for the Catalan national movement the power obtained was simply seen as a starting point. No opportunity would be missed when Spain was governed by minority governments for Catalonia to obtain and accumulate new powers. It was to be this differential reading of the compromises of the transition to democracy that produced small intensity conflicts between Madrid and Barcelona post-1980 and after 2010, political crisis. The un-expected victory of the nationalist coalition in 1980, cemented by an overall majority in 1984, meant that Jordi Pujol, came to embody the new Catalan nationalism of the post-Franco period. Pujol constructed a broad-based dominant political coalition that sought to emulate the dominant position of the Basque nationalist party within its territory. This coalition was built on the Catalan middle classes, from shopkeepers in the small towns to urban professionals in Barcelona. Until 2003, CiU was the most important nationalist formation in the Spanish State and the most electorally successful representative of state-less nationalism in western Europe, winning six consecutive Catalan elections between 1980 and 1999. At various times since the restoration of democracy, CiU played a pivotal role at a Spanish level.

We address the centrality of the Catalan language to its national movement. In April 1983, the Parliament of Catalonia overwhelmingly approved the Law on Language Normalization. This was priority legislation whose purpose was not simply to revive the Catalan language but to transform its status within the educational system and thus, throughout society. It established the use of Catalan as the language of instruction in the classroom through a model known as immersion. In 1975 only 14.5 per cent of the population could write Catalan, whilst only around 35 per cent of secondary school teachers had sufficient competence in the language. Thus extensive teacher training was an important mechanism for the transformation of the school system. Comprehension of Catalan in the populace rose to 95 per cent by 1996, with some 45.8% then having written ability in the language. Radio and television in Catalan became essential components to not only the transformation of the cultural position of the language. Yet by the mid-1990s, concern was increasingly expressed that the expansion of Catalan had stalled. In the same period, a new extra-European international immigration began to change the internal morphology of the country and the linguistic model instituted since 1983 seemed ever less adequate to contemporary needs. For 120

years Catalonia was the most advanced society in the peninsula but by the late 1990s Catalonia had lost its leading role in the political and economic development of Spain, which had been a central element to the narrative of political Catalanism since its emergence in the 1880s. A turn to independence has its origins in this combination of political, economic and cultural factors. The embrace of full political sovereignty as the solution to Catalan problems needs to be situated as an abrupt brake in the wider political culture. We end by considering the reasons for the failure of the pro-independence project.

Teaching Spanish nationalism

Teaching a nationalism with a state apparatus behind it is poses greater difficulties than those movements which struggle against it. This is of course because many deny there is a such as thing as Spanish nationalism and instead speak in proxy terms referencing the Spanish Constitution as embodying a natural and somehow eternal national essence. It is necessary to communicate the comparatively late and weak nation building project as part explanation for what happens subsequently. The Francoist political project sought to create in years what had taken the French state more than a century to achieve, a culturally homogeneous, monoglot population. The regime's view of Spanish unity was premised on the assumption that there existed a historic Spanish nation which incorporated all within the frontiers of the Spanish state. Whilst this impulse to unity was highly destructive of its sub-national opponents, by the regime's end neither Catalan nor Basque nationalism had been eliminated. In fact, their resilience ensured that accommodation was needed in the new democratic conjuncture. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 transformed the territorial structure of Spain, leading to increasing regionalization and the emergence of a tier of sub-national government. However the Constitution was also a compromise between the fundamental tenets of Spanish nationalism and the claims of Basques and Catalans. Aspects of the constitutional settlement around the question of the nation have been the clauses most subject to grievance on the part of Basques and Catalans, whilst the document itself came to hold an increasingly talismanic quality within many social sectors of Spain.

Over the course of the 1980s, Spanish nationalism faced a legitimacy crisis due to its strong association with the dictatorship.[12] The PSOE governments post 1982 sought to embed Spanish identity within the structures of European modernisation. Spanish nation building in this period was European and democratic in its culture. Spanish conservative nationalism remained weak until the 1990s and had few effective mechanisms to express its political concerns. The coming to power of a renewed Spanish conservatism in 1996, without an overall majority,

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[12] Muñoz (2009]

again gave temporary leverage to Catalan nationalism. However, this period was also marked by a resurgent and confident Spanish nationalism, in part produced by the economic transformation of Spain and in particular of Madrid. This Spanish nationalism increasingly questioned the accumulation of concessions obtained by Basques and Catalans in the 1990s and sought to prevent any further devolution of powers to the regions. The last phase of ETA violence was used by this renewed Spanish nationalism to attack and sometimes demonise the mainstream Basque national movement. Spanish conservative nationalism also embarked on challenges to language policies in Catalonia and the Basque Country and sought to harmonise the educational curriculum, partly around areas such as history and geography, where it advocated the teaching of a shared Spanish national story. The initial focus was on Basque nationalism but by the time of the arrival of the economic crisis in 2008, the focus of Spanish nationalism became ever more centred on Catalonia.[13]

Given its greater economic and demographic weight, the turn to independence in Catalonia was mostly met by incomprehension if not outright hostility by the institutions of Spain. The events of 2017 in particular and during the political cycle until 2019 also had a profound societal impact across Spain. Much of the Spanish media landscape and the country's political and legal authorities interpreted the Catalan events as an affront to the honour and integrity of Spain. Anger was also expressed at the framing of Spain internationally as a country of harsh police repression. By 2019, a newly emergent political force, Vox, had capitalised on the Spanish nationalist backlash and become a new and influential actor in the party system in Spain. The Spanish legal authorities, often acting as a parallel power structure, have been unending in their pursuit against apparent threats to Spanish unity. In this context the options for political accommodation between Madrid and Barcelona and a meaningful overhaul of the Spanish Constitutional settlement of 1978 receded. The early 2020s are marked by a period of stasis in terms of reform and wars of position between resurgent Spanish nationalism and a Catalan independence movement on the defensive.

Teaching Nationalist Protest

An important component in the course is considering the questions of political mobilisation and social movements more broadly. Over the course of the twentieth century, the nature of social protest has changed and mutated. This can be attributed to the character of state machinery, the social structure of society and changes in communication patterns.[14] Traditionally, social movements had fo-

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[13] Ucelay da Cal (2015]
[14] Della Porta (2006]; Gamson (1990] and McAdam (2001].

cussed mainly on issues of labour and the nation: since the 1960s, "new social movements" emerged centered on concerns such as women's liberation, environmental protection, etc.[15] We use social movement theory, a rich theoretical perspective drawn from sociology and political science, to provide a framework to understand how marginal actors are sometimes able to create social, institutional, cultural, or political change.[16] We use these theoretical resources to consider how nationalist movements use social mobilisation. Social movement theory has noted how mobilisation often occurs in waves, of peaks and troughs.[17] From the mid-1960s until 1980, we note high levels of social mobilisation and politicisation of culture and language due to the context of the Franco dictatorship. This phase runs parallel due to the demands for democratisation. In the case of a transformation from a dictatorial regime to a parliamentary democracy, these organisations were often hollowed out as much of their membership come to identify with the new political reality. Increasing incorporation with the newly created institutions in both Catalonia and the Basque Country represented a degree of demobilisation. As social movement literature notes, there is always the danger of the incorporation of leading activists into the political mainstream. This phenomenon can be seen particularly in the case of Spain, as social movements saw the transformation of their role in society as the dictatorship, which had provided much of the source for mobilisation, ended. This is the context then to examine in detail distinctive forms of political protest post-1980.

To understand the character of mobilisation in the Basque Country and Catalonia, we focus on political ideas, actions and outcomes of transformative political organisations and nationalist movements.[18] This included radical and mainstream Basque nationalism, Catalan nationalism and sovereignty. Basque nationalist mobilisation was the most visible variant over the course of the 1980s and achieved important gains in crafting a counter-cultural political space. In Catalonia too a movement emerged and crafted a narrative in which radical cultural activity moved hand in hand with support for full political sovereignty. Both movements' long-term significance has come to be seen as primarily socio-cultural, with its dominant characteristics of cultural and linguistic innovation, particularly in communicational forms. Their innovatory contribution to the evolution of contemporary language is the location of political struggle. Public space: the street, the railway station, football stadiums, all were used to convey its message. As we entered the 1990s a new generation became the engine of new social mobilisation and facilitated some of the innovative practice adopted by the nationalist movements such as music festivals and other expressions used to mobilise the young.

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[15] Tilly (1978].
[16] Tarrow (2011]; Castells (2015]; Jenkins (1983]; Meyer (2006] and Klandermans (1997].
[17] Tilly (2008].
[18] Olzak (2004] and Guell (2003].

In varying ways cultural movements led campaigns of civil disobedience against the Spanish authorities.[19] In particular we see how culture and particularly language became the new battleground. The education system, the language revival models and those who work in these areas have thus been at the forefront of the clash between Spanish and Basque/Catalan views of the appropriate place of the language within society. Though it is often ignored in the literature, social mobilisation can articulate conservative intentions and find powerful expression. It is therefore also necessary to consider mobilisation against both Basque nationalism and ETA violence that intensified in the 1990s. We also see that as the Catalan sovereignty movement intensified, sectors of Spanish nationalism mobilised to resist concessions to Catalonia and what became termed the potential break up of Spain. This reaction culminated in the mass pro-Spanish unity demonstration of October 2017 in the city of Barcelona as well as the proliferation of Spanish national symbols during the Catalan crisis. We note how some of this energy surfaced in the rapid rise of the far-right party Vox and that the current coalition government of PSOE-Podemos is repeatedly framed by actors on the right as in thrall to Catalan independence sectors. Thus we see again how historically constructed contention and contestation continues to form the current political context in Spain.

Course structure

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The main teaching formats were lectures and seminars. Each week had two contact hours with each type of class taught for an hour. At least one piece of reading such as a book chapter or journal article were allocated weekly and an audio-visual component also formed part of the teaching approach. Materials were in both English and Spanish though English was the sole teaching language. Assessment was by two essays of 2,500 words, with one required to be on Catalonia and the other on the Basque Country. The temporal spread was different in each case. The Basque question was taught more broadly up to around 2005 whilst the Catalan case was broadly uncontentious until the same period. We focussed in much greater detail on Catalonia after 2010 as this is when Catalan society began to break from its traditional post-transition role in Spanish society. The course aims were defined as providing students with a wide range of basic knowledge and a better understanding of the political and cultural reality of Spain. The course objectives then sought to provide students with the opportunity to engage in critically and historically informed analysis enabling them to comprehend the deeper social, economic and political forces at work. This basic objective was to be achieved by placing both historical and contemporary nationalist movements within context, and to achieve informed discussion of the political, economic and social issues arising in contemporary Spain. Mid-module feedback was used at approximately the half-way point of the module to assess learning. Whilst the

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[19] Portos (2016] and Guijoan (2016].

broad teaching structure can be deemed traditional, ie lectures and small group seminars, these methods were the main but not the only component in learning. Short segments of audio-visual resources were used in both contexts and we used primary sources in the small group context. These might be an article from a Spanish newspaper such as El País, ABC or La Vanguardia or a manifesto or statement from a cultural or political organisation. Since incorporating periodic encounters with primary sources in my teaching, I have seen how they engage students, help them to develop critical thinking skills, and learn to construct knowledge. These innovations in how I teach are particularly effective in teaching students about empathy, judgement and how we must be cautious in the use of hindsight.

The content breakdown in my course, over 10 weeks is as follows. Weeks one to three focus on the theory of nationalism with the third week centred on the differences between state nationalism (Spain) and sub-state nationalism (the Basque Country and Catalonia). The next four weeks situate the Basque question in context; the transition and violence, the consolidation of Basque autonomy and ending with the long road to a peace process. We then turn to Catalonia. We examine the differential experience of Catalonia during the transition and consider the emergence and dominance of mainstream Catalan nationalism. We situate an increasing crisis in this nationalism in the late 1990s and we see the emergence of a pro-independence narrative. We then centre our concerns on the period 2008 to 2019. We complete the module by a consideration of Spain in the near future and assess the probability of the continuance of Basque and Catalan political conflicts. We inevitably cover a lot of material and the priority should be thematic rather than an over-concern with temporality. Our principal concern must be that we articulate all of the broad themes so students do not feel lost within a plethora of detail. There are a number of fragmented and factionalised political cultures. Exact names of organisations and changes in nomenclature, eg Herri Batasuna, Euskal Heritarrok, Batasuna or Bildu is less important than comprehending the political space represented.

Teaching resources

Choosing appropriate materials for teaching has been comparatively easy. Texts such as Labanyi and Graham offer useful starting points whilst Balfour and Quiroga's *The Reinvention of Spain* is helpful to situate more general debates.[20] To consider Spanish nationalism more in-depth resources in Spanish were principally utilised such as the extensive work by Núñez Seixas as well as contributions by scholars such as Taibo.[21] There is a long standing abundance of materials in English on the Basque Country whilst there has been substantial improvement in

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[20] Balfour and Quiroga (2007].
[21] Núñez Seixas (2001, 2005 and 2018] and Taibo (2014].

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materials on Catalonia over the past decade. Diez-Medrano's study remains an essential starting point.[22] The main texts used on the Basque Country were Clark, Sullivan, Heiberg, Zulaika, Zirakzadeh and Muro.[23] On Catalonia we used Crameri, Dowling, Guibernau as well as useful journalistic but analytical interventions such as Álvaro, Garcia, March and Martínez.[24]

Recent years has seen the rise of the podcast as a resources and sites with useful episodes included the Madrid based English platform, the Sobremesa podcast, as well as selected episodes from Acontece no es Poco and Memorias de un Tambor. Productive use was made of two documentaries: La Pelota Vasca (The Basque Ball) and the Netflix based Catalonia-Spain. The format of both documentaries fit in very well with my teaching approach because both films treat the Basque and Catalan questions as complex, multi-casual and provide a full range of personal and political perspectives. Whilst I would not want to take too far this observation, it is clear that many of today's students respond more to audio-visual resources than the traditional book chapter/journal article. Even so, I assigned them a weekly piece to read as well as podcast or other type of audio-visual. The best use of audio-visual materials should be as an encouragement to deeper engagement with the written materials. Therefore film and podcasts should be seen as complimentary resources rather than replacements for more traditional formats. Engert and Spencer have noted how film can be used productively in the classroom setting.[25]

Conclusion

Contrary to the predictions of some social scientists, nationalism has not faded over time. Our contemporary age is one where national identity retains important salience. Nationalism is both vector of mobilisation and source of a sense of belonging to an imagined community by means of the construction of a national collective memory. Spain has found itself as the centre of these issues in a way experienced by few European societies, excepting the United Kingdom.[26] Whilst Spanish society was periodically convulsed by ETA violence from the late 1970s, the Catalan challenge of 2017 was an unprecedented political challenge. This secessionist threat by Catalonia, perhaps more imagined than real, even so produced the greatest political crisis in Spain since February 1981. Spanish political reality remains plural and multi-lingual. Teaching on the issues of the Basques and Catalans within contemporary Spain to British students has posed challen-

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[22] Diez-Medrano (1995).

[23] Clark (1984); Sullivan (1988); Heiberg (1989), Zulaika (1988), Zirakzadeh (1991) and Muro (2005 and 2008).

[24] Crameri (2014); Dowling (2012 and 2018); Guibernau (2004); March (2018); Álvaro (2019) Garcia (2018) and Martínez (2016).

[25] Engert and Spencer (2009).

[26] Linz (1973)

ges but I believe that each can be overcome. I have found that combining theoretical insights from scholars on nationalism and social movement studies has been a particularly productive way to interrogate conflicting identities. This module was designed as a history course but it broke with any pre-conceived conception that students might have of history as centred on facts, dates and names. As the material required to comprehend the topic was diverse this facilitated critical thinking skills being fully utilised. Furthermore important social values such as tolerance and empathy can be enhanced by studying materials of this kind.[27] This was not a course that suggested there was a historical truth that needed to be simply uncovered but rather sought to demonstrate that questions of identity are contingent and continually subject to re-creation and re-interpretation.

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[27] Tribukait (2021]

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