Catalonia in Spain and Europe

Is There a Way to Independence?
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Introduction

Stephan Rixen / Klaus-Jürgen Nagel

During the fall of 2014, two well-established nation states of Europe, both EU members, faced important secessionist challenges. In the United Kingdom, the claim for Scottish independence was rejected in an official referendum that took place after the victory of Scottish independentist party, SNP, at the Scottish election. This victory brought the UK government to the negotiation table. In the end, the UK changed the rules of the game and the Scottish people were allowed to decide. In Catalonia, Catalan nationalist parties standing for a referendum on independence also won their parliamentary elections (in late 2012). However, attempts to reach an agreement with the Spanish government failed. Defying the prohibition by the Spanish government and the Constitutional Court, an unofficial consultation on independence was organized. On November 9, 2014, of the 2.3 million participants (about a third of the census), over 80% voted “yes” to becoming an independent state. Participants, however, were aware that this act would have no binding legal consequences. While in the UK a debate on greater devolution started after the decision, in Catalonia, at the time of writing, the deadlock on the “right to decide” remains unbroken.

This book is primarily about Catalonia. However, we will also analyze its case and claim inside both the Spanish and European contexts. We will include some comparative perspective, not only by providing particular chapters on Scotland and Belgium, but by referring to other cases in most of the chapters on Catalonia. The development of Catalan sovereignty, in fact, has surprised more than one observer, national as well as foreign. On September 11, 1977, the Catalan national holiday, one million Catalans took to the streets of Barcelona to claim autonomy. These were years when, according to pollsters, only ~2% of the population preferred independence to other ways of accommodation (see Martínez-Herrera/Miley 2010: 13). On the same occasion in 2012, 2013, and 2014, even more people participated in marches organized by civil society associations. But they now claimed “a new state in Europe” (2012), or an outright referendum on independence (2013, 2014). According to polls conducted by the Centre d’Estudis d’Opinió, independence is the preferred option of the Catalan people, stopping
very short of achieving an absolute majority. This recent and quick change of public opinion in Catalonia is also confirmed by an absolute majority of the Catalan parliament standing for a referendum – and a somewhat smaller, but still clear, majority of MPs that would vote “yes” to independence.

Catalan nationalism has been considered, more often than not, to be just a regionalist movement striving for a Catalanization of Spain and to secure the states’ governability when necessary. Controlled by elites, Catalanism, in this record, could easily be pacified by granting some competence or financial autonomy - and be denounced as blackmailing in turn. Catalanism, stemming from the 19th century language movement in favor of the Catalan language, had always been divided between left and right wing parties, and these divisions provided some clues to Spanish forces in need of support. The Catalan population, in great part stemming from Spanish migrants, was and still is in its majority linked to family members and friends living in the rest of Spain. Immigration from outside the state, eg from Latin America, North Africa, and elsewhere, also seemed to dilute ethnic identity. Catalonia’s history as an independent polity had ended as early as 1714 when it became fully incorporated into the Bourbon monarchy of Spain. Although Catalonia was the first industrialized region of the peninsula, its leading role in terms of GDP is nowadays contested by other regions, and its economy, though industrialized and export orientated, still depends quite a lot on the Spanish market (see Nagel 2015 forthcoming).

Considering all these links, how could the number of people in favor of a referendum and even those preferring independence grow so quickly; why is the current status of one of the 17 autonomous communities of Spain not acceptable or no longer acceptable to the majority among the Catalan population, in spite of providing some recognition (as a region and nationality), many administrative and some legislative competences, and a co-official status to the Catalan language (albeit strictly limited to the territory)? Ready-made explanations like those provided by media in and outside Spain seem inadequate. An egoistic rejection to share Catalan taxes with other part of Spain does not explain the moment and the speed of the independentist turn. The draining of resources to Madrid and other parts of Spain has had a long history. To consider the economic crisis (which makes the yearly financial deficit of 6-8% of the Catalan GDP less bearable) may provide some insight, but the social composition of sovereigntism and the moment of its growth

1 See numbers published in the Catalan daily newspaper “Ara”, 1.11.2014, www.ara.cat
seem to indicate that there are other issues at stake. Nation-building activities of Catalan elites that could have used autonomy to indoctrinate children at school or people via the Catalan public media do not provide a satisfactory explanation. About 55% (soon 65%) of the contents of the curriculum of Catalan secondary schools remains under the control of Madrid, and the audience rate of Catalan TV stands between 20 and 30%. These factors cannot be ignored. But they cannot explain the timing and the speed of the turn towards independence.

We have repeatedly insisted on the importance of the political moment (eg Nagel 2013, 2014). In 2003, socialist candidate Rodríguez Zapatero came to Barcelona to help his fellow socialists in their Catalan elections. He promised to help Catalonia to a new, enlarged statute of autonomy, if only the Catalans (in 2013) and the Spanish electors in 2014 would render correspondent majorities, which – to nearly everybody’s surprise – happened. A window of opportunity seemed to have opened. As a statute of autonomy is a Madrid law and no constitution of a member state, the Catalan parliament alone could only propose, but not decide such a new statute. In 2005, it agreed a text that was backed by >80% of its MPs. However, the Madrid parliament, with its socialist majority, did not accept this text as it stood (as promised by Zapatero), but watered it down considerably. Nevertheless, the text was passed by a referendum in Catalonia and accepted by the Catalans in 2006. This, however, proved to be only the start of a story, because the conservative opposition and some socialist politicians brought the text to the Constitutional Court, which in 2010 (ie after 4 years of debate) failed against many of its provisions. The long duration of this process (with its corresponding leaks) and the final decision that was interpreted as going against the dignity of Catalonia as it disavowed the result of the referendum and mobilized the civil society of Catalonia. New sovereigntist movements and platforms bypassed the reluctant moderate Convergència party. New leaders proved their value in this process. The Catalan nationalist parties radicalized, and where the leaders did not adapt (like Artur Mas of Convergència), they were exchanged (as in Esquerra Republicana). In spite of the burgeoning economic crisis, the 2012 Catalan election was fought on the issue of a referendum on independence. This political chronology of the upsurge of sovereigntism and independentism is shared by many of the contributors to this book.

But our book also looks into the possibilities of achieving independence. Like most Constitutions, the Spanish one does not provide any right to secede. But can it possibly be inferred from other principles? The European institutions and particularly the Commission lead by Barroso have inter-
interpreted the European Treaties as adverse to admitting an independent Catalonia as a member state of the EU, and they have therefore been quite outspoken in rejecting the claim. However, Catalans may feel to have some rights as European citizens, in particular, to be considered by a European government. International Law, while not excluding secession per se, is written by states and its purpose may be to support them and avoid any instability. Can the normative set-ups be interpreted or adapted in more favorable ways to accommodate the will of a majority of the Catalans, if it has been declared? And in case it happens, how should Europe and other states react? Would a Catalan state be in any way dangerous for its minorities, democracy, stability, or public welfare? And what alternative forms of accommodation could and should politicians and citizens analyze when coming to a decision?

This book brings together specialists from different fields, but all the authors deal with the challenges of national diversity to the existing nation-states, the European Union and the state system. Academic disciplines represented herein include Law, Political Science, Economy, Sociology and History. They bring together Catalan academics (working in their country or abroad) and German researchers, living either in Germany or in Catalonia and Spain. Germany’s political class and its media (see examples in Nagel, 2014) are particularly critical towards nationalism and separatism, while these phenomena are quite intensively treated in German academy. This provides some reason for bringing these communities together. However, the composition of the authorships of this book also reflects its history, which started at a conference in Bayreuth on May 22th and 23rd, 2014. We want to express our thanks to all those that contributed to organizing this event and its intensive and lively discussions. The chapters of this book were written after these discussions, and many had to update their contributions more than once due to the intensive history of the “process” that has culminated in the unofficial referendum of November 9th, 2014.

This book starts with Hans-Jürgen Puhle’s succinct account of the trajectories (in the plural form) of Catalan Nationalism during the 150 years of its history, providing insight on the mostly reformist, interventionist, and, particularly during the last 30 years, law-abiding character of Catalan nationalism. However, it also affirms that these “idyllic” years are now over. From the standpoint of a political theorist, Jaume López discusses the moral issues at stake when a claim for independence is based on a “right to decide”, that is, democracy, challenging current views on self-determination based on the nation. As lawyers, Antoni Abat and Hermann-Josef Blanke deal with the
juridical possibilities of achieving independence, with Abat mainly analyzing the Spanish constitutional and legal background, and Blanke tackling European and International Law. Abat refers to the Constitutional setting, the judgments of the Constitutional Court, and the dominant opinions, but also refers to some possibilities of interpretations as more favorable for allowing a referendum. Blanke and Abdelrehim insist that there is no right to secession in the Spanish constitution or international law – there is “no way without Madrid” in this interpretation. A secession, if it took place, would then be based on a revolutionary act, in spite of eventual ratification after a successful control of the territory. Inside Catalonia and Spain, conditions for a successful accommodation were favorable, considering the demographic relations to Spain and the dual identities that have prevailed for so many years. Ivan Serrano therefore asks why sovereignty has surged so strongly, in the end even changing the self-identification of many Catalans. Numbers in hand, he insists on the importance of the failure of the statute of autonomy negotiated between 2004 and 2006, a process that ended only with the sentence of the Constitutional Court in 2010. One of his conclusions is the loss of salience of the identity argument for those that defend Catalan independence, while Spanish identity is of high salience for those that reject it. His data may change the point of view of many that used to see minority nationalisms as driven by ethnic identity, while considering state nationalism as civic. The civic concept of Catalan nationality is also treated in Núria Franco’s account of (recent) immigration and independence, in particular, the integrative efforts of the Catalan nationalist organizations that in many ways parallel the Scottish case. Peter Kraus tackles a directly related issue, language. Language was at the core of the historic nationalist movement of Catalonia, and for a long time it has been the most important marker of Catalan identity. However, according to Kraus, language claims are losing salience, while the sovereigntist movement grows – this movement is based on other grounds. After tackling these important issues of Catalan identity and identity construction, Elisenda Paluzie analyses the fiscal issues of Catalan independence. She insists on the size of the fiscal deficit, and sees the financial imbalance upset primarily by the lack of state spending in infrastructures that an underfinanced region could not make good for. This contrasts with the situation of the Basque Country. Many Catalan nationalists would have voted for a similar solution, but this option now seems to be closed. While the economic crisis, in her view, may have accelerated the process, the political crisis on the statute reform had preceded it.
While from a Catalan and particularly from a sovereigntist position (and we hasten to add, also from most Spanish viewpoints), the alternatives of a maximized devolution, federalism, confederalism and consociationalism are now impossible (as they would need a constitutional reform that would have to be supported by both major parties of Spain, without the need for Catalanist support), they do however exist, at least from a theoretical viewpoint. From a law professor’s point of view, Stephan Rixen gives a summary of the Belgian mode of strong federalism. In his view, Belgium’s institutional setting, backed up by sophisticated constitutional law arrangements, installs a never-ending process of negotiations that have avoided until now formal independence and foster a sort of hidden independence, especially of Flanders. Law professors Markus Möstl and Florian Becker tackle devolution in the UK, Möstl asking whether it will lead to independence, but in a “soft” way, and Becker considering the possible accommodation of an independent Scotland in the EU. As Scotland is a model to which Catalan independentists often refer, this is of utmost importance for the so-called “process” in Catalonia. These contributions may provide useful insights for defenders of negotiated solutions, but they may also increase the envy of those Catalans that, after the experience of the last years, consider the Spanish institutions to be essentially averse to serious and open negotiation. Mario Kölling, from his privileged position as a German expert working in Spain and (also) for Spanish institutions, analyzes the possible consequences of Catalan independence for Germany’s foreign and European policy. While it may be unfair to ask too much hindsight of an academic, it may also be true that think-tanks and governments consider the consequences of a possible independence for their country and Europe, in spite of initially rejecting such an outcome. Germany is perhaps the country that has most clearly sided with the position of the Spanish government, and this is of utmost interest here. In the last chapter, Klaus-Jürgen Nagel tries to analyse the “viability” of an independent Catalonia, not only as a national economy, but as a liberal democracy. For him, an independent Catalonia, should it transpire, would most probably be just a normal European state of medium to small size, but not suitable to be taken over by a sole economic interest, and endowed with a civil society and a democratic party system, thereby causing little significant danger to liberal rights of its inhabitants, democracy and peace (thus excluding these reasons for rejecting independence on principle).
References


Trajectories of Catalan nationalism and its present discontents

Hans-Jürgen Puhle

This chapter is not about Catalan independence. It will rather focus on the trajectories of Catalan Nationalism, its concepts and movements, with particular interest in changes over time, and in the different stages of Catalanism and Catalan Nationalism throughout 150 years. In the limited space, only a brief summary will be possible and some hints at the basic lines of social background, interests, programs and ideology of the Catalan Nationalists. It will look at their achievements and limitations, internal cleavages and divisions, and possible or impossible alliances with ‘Spanish’ political forces, as well as with each other. Simplifications – hopefully adequate – will be unavoidable.¹

1. Initial constellations

Nationalism requires organization. In order to organize a nationalist movement, a concept of a nation is needed, whatever its definition, its dimension, and ultimately its construction. What a nation is, is basically a matter of opinion, even if some plausible and tangible characteristics (often called the ‘proto-national minimum’) may be required to make the idea sustainable. Usually they are found in language and culture, and the history and the networks behind it, and less in voluntaristic aspirations.² The Catalan idea of the nation has been a product of European romanticism of the first half of

¹ A more extended version of this paper is pre-published as part of a comparative study on Welsh and Catalan Nationalisms in the NISE platform Studies on National Movements (www.nise.eu; 2015). I am particularly grateful to Klaus-Jürgen Nagel and Enric Ucelay da Cal for their critical comments.

the 19th century. As in all cases of ‘belated’ or ‘stateless’ nations, it was a culturalist concept driven by reifications, drawing more on Herder than Rousseau. It has never been a uniform idea. Since the 1860s, two different connotations could be distinguished: a more conservative and a more liberal (later a progressive one). These corresponded to the different contexts from which Catalan Nationalism has developed. For the 19th century, at least four strands of movements and ideologies can be identified: first, the broad and rich spectrum of Catalan cultural renaissance (Renaixença) since the 1830-40s, often linked to romantic ideas; second, petty bourgeois federalism and progressivism, around and since the Revolution and the First Republic in the late 1860s and the 1870s; third, conservative bourgeois provincialism that later became regionalism; and fourth, clerico-reactionary conservatism, mostly of Carlist origins.3

The breakthrough of the Catalanist movement to Miroslav Hroch’s phase B around 1880 was due to a characteristic constellation in which several factors came together: cultural and organizational saturation due to the effects of the Renaixença (from the 1830s onwards), economic prosperity and modernization by the repercussions of full scale industrialization in relevant parts of Catalonia since the 1860s, on the one hand, and a continuation and intensification of politico-institutional dispossession and frustration, on the other, from the 1830s through the 1860s down to the Restauration and the end of the Third Carlist War in the 1870s.4

Catalan Nationalism has been part of what I call the fourth wave out of a total of six waves of contemporary nationalist movements, each defined by a number of macro-regional, developmental and functional similarities. These were the nationalist or regional-nationalist movements of the so-called ‘smaller’ peripheral nations within the Western and Southern European

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states, which have fought for autonomy statutes and federalization of the state more often than for a new nation state of their own. Among them, we can find different intensities and different types. For Catalan Nationalism, we can date the Hrochian thresholds as following: AB around 1880, BC around 1900, and the autonomist equivalent for statehood (NS) in 1932/79, so that the complete formula relating the developmental stages of the national movement to the stages of statewide socio-economic and political development (simplified BR, IR, OW), would look like this: BR – IR – AB – OW – BC – (NS). In my terminology Catalonia would therefore belong to the cases of disintegrated dissociation (because BC comes much behind BR) of a relatively developed society.

2. Divided actors

A characteristic feature of Catalan Nationalism is that it has always been divided, almost from its beginnings, often along class lines, recently more along ideological lines. It experienced its first substantial turnaround when the Lliga Regionalista was established in 1901, triggered by the repercussions and polarizations of the great Spanish crisis around 1898. Before the turnaround, Catalanism had been dominated by anti-centralist and mostly anti-modernist notables of the small towns of the hinterland. It then established itself as a relatively ‘modern’ Barcelona-centric emancipation movement of the urban bourgeoisie, which had become regionalist because it was strong enough to rule Catalonia, but too weak either to dominate Spain or declare independence, and hence embarked on a tendentially ‘imperialistic’

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6 AB transition to cultural nationalism, BC transition to political nationalism, NS ‘nation state’ (or equivalent).
7 For AB, e.g., 1879 Diari Català, 1880 1. Catalanist Congress, 1882 Centre Català, 1883 2. Congress (political program), 1886 Almirall: Lo Catalanisme; for BC: 1886 Almirall: Lo Catalanisme, 1891 Unió Catalanista (UC), 1892 Bases de Manresa [the political program, part. art. 4, 16], 1897 Centre Català (Almirall), 1898 Spanish crisis (polarization), 1901 Lliga Regionalista.
8 BR bourgeois revolution, IR industrial revolution, OW organisation of working class movement.
9 For comparison, see Puhle, ‘Neue Nationalismen’, 170.
course (Ucelay da Cal) that tried to follow its own interests at home as well as influence and penetrate Spanish society and politics as much as possible. The Lliga Regionalista under the leadership of Prat de la Riba and Cambó became a modern mass party, equally present in Catalonia and in Madrid politics. It was the hegemonic faction of Catalan Nationalism between 1901 and the mid-1920s and one of the dominant forces of Catalan politics (besides the Lerroux Republicans); the party’s mobilization reached its peak in 1916.10

The Lliga dominated wide sectors of the intense networks of Catalan civil society, particularly among the entrepreneurial (Foment), agricultural (IACSI) and cultural organizations, but not all of them. There always were dissenters, more radical minority factions, mostly under the umbrella of the Unió Catalanista (UC), particularly the commercial employees (CADCI), and later the tenant winegrowers of the Unió de Rabassaires (UDR 1922),11 or the many middle class and intellectual initiatives trying to win over more Republican voters and attract workers. Among these groups of the ‘Catalanist Left’, we can find short-lived enterprises, like the axis Layret/Segui/Companys around 1920, and many organizational endeavours, often small, given to fragmentation and of short duration.12 The most important ones were the Centre Nacionalista Republicà (CNR 1906/07), the Unió Federal Nacionalista Republicana (UFNR 1910), the Esquerra Catalanista (1914), the Bloc Republicà Autonomista (BRA 1915), the Partit Republicà Català (PRC 1917), Macià’s separatist Federació-Democràtica Nacionalista (FDN 1919), and Domingo’s populist Esquerra Catalana (1921). There were also the heretic and explicitly nationalist (and no longer regionalist) youth organizations and social catholics of Acció Catalana (AC) that split from the Lliga in 1922. So we better might put Catalan Nationalisms into the plural.


12 See the comprehensive analysis in K.J. Nagel, Arbeiderschaft und nationale Frage in Katalonien zwischen 1898 und 1923 (Saarbrücken, 1991).
The internal divisions of the Catalan Nationalists were, of course, a liability for their political influence and weight. The Lliga’s strategy of corporate integration failed, due to the limitations of its bourgeois class politics, its many pacts with the Spanish government, and because its room for manoeuvre in the Mancomunitat (1913-24) was insufficient. The party lost votes, split in 1922, and continued discrediting itself through the 1920s and 30s. The diffuse ‘Catalanist Left’ consisted mostly of artisans and intelligentsia trying to reach out to the workers, particularly those organized by the CNT. But whenever they did so, they lost middle-class Catalanists and mostly could not win over the workers either. Until 1917/18, they often became sandwiched between the Lliga and the CNT. This changed in the Second Republic when cooperation increased. On the whole, the ‘Catalanist Left’ was much more Nationalist than Socialist: Wilson triumphed over Lenin (Ucelay da Cal).14

Political separatism that emerged after the First World War was basically tied to middle class interests from the hinterland (and eventually the CADCI) and had no mass basis because it polarized the Catalans by attacking the Lliga and splitting the left. However, at least in retrospective, Macià’s Estat Catalá (EC 1922) should be singled out. It started out separatist, fought the Primo dictatorship, moved back to a federalist position, used populist strategies to make Catalan nationalism more attractive to the middle and working classes, colonized the PRC and others, and became one of the driving forces behind the populist alliance of the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) of 1931, which united separatists (Macià), Republican Catalanists (Companys) and Radical Populists (Domingo), and established itself as the hegemonic actor in Catalanist politics throughout the 1930s. In 1931, the Esquerra proclaimed a Catalan Republic within an Iberian Federation, even before the Spanish Republic had been proclaimed. The ‘Catalanist Left’ had taken over Catalan Nationalism, but at a price.15

13 See B. de Riquer, Alfonso XIII y Cambó. La monarquía y el catalanismo político (Barcelona, 2013); Ucelay da Cal, El imperialismo.
3. **Party politics and pacts**

During most of the 20th century, Catalan Nationalism has been dominated by party politics. The exception was the consolidated years of the Franco Regime when Catalanist interests and strategies were coordinated more by culturalist and civil society organizations. Nationalist policies were usually defined by the hegemonic parties (or alliances) that organized and represented the nationalists. Between 1900 and the mid-20s, this was the Lliga, during the 1930s the ERC, and for a longer time after the transition of the late 1970s the Pujolisme of Convergència i Unió (CiU). Despite the differences between these parties there have been a number of interesting continuities in shared beliefs, programmatic preferences, in the articles of the nationalist credo, the use of the movements’ traditions (including what Enric Ucelay da Cal has called the ‘Catalan Whig interpretation of history’), and particularly in the secular shift towards populist politics. The Lliga paved the way, ERC pushed populism to its breakthrough, and Pujolisme (to the chagrin of the resurrected Esquerra) ratified and continued it in an eclectic way, as if CiU were the natural successor of the ERC of the Republic (and of the Lliga). Which it was, in a way.

Another crucial element of the politics of Catalan Nationalists has been, at least until 2012, a modern version of ‘pactisme’, i.e. a tendency towards (and often a need for) concluding pacts and building alliances with other, mostly non-nationalist political forces, usually ad hoc, and differently on different issues and in different political arenas. Often the differences between Nationalist groups have been defined by their alliances, be it with bourgeois or middle class groups, populist and catch-all parties of all kinds, or the usual factions of the working class movements. Among the last, the special relationships between ‘more Catalan’ groups of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT (Segui, Trentistes), the Socialists and Communists (USC, PSUC, POUM, eventually the PSC, though less and less) and the ‘Catalanist Left’ are particularly interesting. Here various additional cleavages (like Monarchy/Republic, Church/State, Right/Left) interfered and partly overlapped with the principal cleavage between Nationalist and Non-Nationalist politics. Classical examples for such ‘mixed-cleavage’ pacts have been the participation in the conservative Spanish governments from 1899 onwards, Solidaritat Catalana (1906), the alliances for the Mancomunitat (1913), for

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16 Ucelay da Cal, ‘History’, 129.
the political transitions and autonomy statutes of the 1930s, the 1970s, and after 2000, or the various pacts with Republicans and Anarchosyndicalists after 1917 and in the 1920-30s, or with Socialists and Communists since the Second Republic, in the Civil War and opposition against Franco (e.g., Coordinadora de Forzas Polítiques de Catalunya 1969, Assemblea de Catalunya 1971). 

In Spain’s new democracy, both Conservative and Socialist governments have often needed the votes of Jordi Pujol’s CiU in Madrid (and paid for it). At home in Catalonia, Pujol, when he needed a partner after 1999, preferred to ally himself with the Conservative Spanish Partido Popular (PP), and not (like in the mid-80s) with his ‘leftist’ fellow Nationalists of the ERC. And the latter had no major problems to join the coalition governments of the ‘Tripartit’ led by the Catalan Socialists (2003-2010), the chief rivals of the Nationalists (though with rising internal dissent from 2006 onwards), while at the same time (2004-2006) CiU leaders negotiated an agreement on the new autonomy statute with the Spanish Socialists in Madrid. It was not until the conflict over the new autonomy statute had escalated and CiU had been punished in the elections of 2012 that the Esquerra came back to tolerate a CiU government in Catalonia. In times of Nationalist radicalization and polarization, the space for ‘pactisme’ seems for the first time to have shrunk. It appeared (at least for the time being) to be confined to the Nationalist camp only.

4. From regionalism to ‘autonomism’ to separatism

If we reduce the aspirations and options of the significant actors of Catalan Nationalism to four basic types: regionalism, federalism, ‘autonomism’, and separatism (or independentism), and look at the trajectories of the various movements through the last 130 years or so, we can identify a characteristic trend along those lines. This was from regionalism and federalism through ‘autonomism’ to separatism and independentism, not without overlaps, double standards, shifts, and many elements of ‘die Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen’ that might require some caveats. ‘Federalism’, for example, has
to be qualified because the notion in some cases might not refer to unifying federal systems like the Swiss, German or North American, but more to loosely coupled confederations like the ‘Iberian Federation’ in traditional Anarcho-syndicalist or Catalanist terminology, which could be combined with independence or with regionalism, as in the Bases de Manresa of 1892. New notions of ‘asymmetric federalism’ have emerged in more recent times.¹⁸

On the whole, we can clearly distinguish four phases. From the beginnings in the 1880s until around 1917/18 regionalist concepts prevailed as they were embodied in the politics of the Lliga or in the modest institutions of the Mancomunitat (1913-24), even if there were eventual overlaps with federalist positions, Catalonia was more and more seen as a nation, and some dissenting organizations of the ‘Catalanist Left’ from 1906/1910 on increasingly asked for more institutionalized autonomy and a respective statute. There were no meaningful separatist demands whatsoever.

This changed significantly in the second phase from 1917/18 to the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939. It was characterized by the disappearance of regionalism, a structural parallelism of separatist and autonomist demands, in which the latter prevailed, and a number of different federalist revivals in both contexts. Separatist aspirations were first voiced by Macià in November 1918, and remained the credo of FDN and Estat Català through 1923 and beyond, although it lost some of its teeth by being ever more blended with federalism and populism, and by a general upsurge of autonomism. The position of the ERC in 1931 was federalist (including some separatists), but it accepted the autonomist compromise of the Statute of Nuria of 1932, although not without a tendency to relapse, as in the October uprising of 1934 when Companys proclaimed a Catalan State that was not to be. The ERC’s position was shared by its Socialist ally of the Unió Socialista de Catalunya (USC), which in 1936 became the core of the PSUC, one of its closest partners in a time of war. Also the influential tenant wine-growers of the Unió de Rabassaires (UDR) and the Bloc Obrer i Camperol (BOC) which was more Socialist and Communist than Nationalist (and later

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ended in the POUM), favoured separatism for a time before the final phase of the Civil War and Franco’s victory made further discussions pointless. 19

The third phase from the reinstallation of the Generalitat in 1977 and the Autonomy Statute of Sau (1979) to 2005/06 was the heyday of ‘autonomism’, and an almost ‘idyllic’ phase of Catalan Nationalism under the hegemony of Pujolisme, in a new structural context: the Spanish Estado de las Autonomías. Conceived as ‘asymmetric’ in the beginning, the system has, however, been increasingly ‘resymmetrized’ by framework legislation and more generalized policies of decentralization, so that it is now deemed insufficient by the Catalan Nationalists and government. Pujol’s ruling coalition (CiU) of the liberal CDC and the Christian-Democratic UDC (smaller and less nationalistic) represented an unspecific and streamlined nationalism ‘without adjectives’. It paid lip-service to self-determination, remained unclear toward federalism, and behaved loyal to the Estado de las Autonomías actively taking advantage of its mechanisms and opportunities, particularly in educational and cultural matters. ‘Pujolisme’, in a selective way, embraced the populist heritage of the ERC of the 30s, and many of the entrepreneurial, missionary and ‘imperialist’ traditions of the Lliga, defining Catalonia as a principal agent of progress and modernization, for the Països Catalans, and for Spain and Europe. ‘Autonomism’ also overwhelmingly prevailed in the surveys on the preferences of the Catalans with regard to territorial organization, but separatism was not an issue. Only the small and more radical Republican Esquerra (ERC), after a generational shift of its leadership, set a separatist course again in its new program of 1992, far earlier than others. 20

This ‘idyllic phase’ came to an end and a fourth phase began when after 2005 survey preferences began to change, more rapidly so from 2007 on-
