

Comparative Political Reactions in Spain from the 1930s to the Present

Undergraduate Research Thesis

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by

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## Introduction

George Santayana, a 20th century philosopher once said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” In Spain’s *Pacto de Olvido*, the goal was just that, to forget. The pact was initially a political decision, but was given legal legitimacy in the *Ley De Amnistía*. The decree prevented any accountability for the people who were killed, tortured, and exiled during the civil war. It pardoned those (even far-right military commanders) who were involved in the regime, allowed those who were exiled to return to Spain, and has prevented the nation from investigating human rights violations under the dictatorship. Further, the pact prevented any observation of the war or any commission to look into who bore responsibility for the war (Encarnación). Regardless, memory is crucial in order to understand the past of a nation and its trajectory moving forward. When the people of a nation do not remember the atrocities of war, a door is opened for blood to be shed again. In a covert way, radical ideologies can make themselves known, even in societies that have moved past violence. In a more democratic world like that of today, political ideologies, good and bad, must be expressed through electoral politics, rather than blatant displays of authoritarianism.

VOX is a current political party in Spain that was founded in 2013. It came about as a faction that split away from the Partido Popular. The party, interestingly, was given about one million euros from the National Council of Resistance of Iran, a previously known terrorist organization. According to their website, VOX is “la voz de la España Viva. VOX es el partido de la España viva, libre, y valiente.” This slogan is eerily similar to that of Spain during the Franco regime: “España, una, grande, y libre.” The term “libre” here must take on a different meaning, as the Franco regime was anything but. Its origins tout individual freedoms: “Falange Española considera al hombre como conjunto de un cuerpo y un alma; es decir, como capaz de

un destino eterno; como portador de valores eternos. Así pues, el máximo respeto se tribute a la dignidad humana, a la integridad del hombre y a su libertad” (Falange Española 4). In theory, this mantra seems positive, but the ways in which the regime brought about oppression are obvious. In the same way, many of the ideas of VOX are practical, but are met with much backlash. Its website further discusses its stance on issues, while being intentionally vague. One issue that stands out is illegal immigration. VOX condemns any type of illegal immigration and hopes to deport all illegal immigrants. In April 2019, VOX posted a meme on Twitter depicting a character from Lord of the Rings facing his enemies, namely, the feminist movement, the Catalanian independence movement, Antifa, the LGBT community (depicted by a rainbow ghost), among others, with the caption “Qué comience la batalla” (let the battle begin). The battle referenced here may be the battle of Covadonga, a skirmish between Muslim and Spanish forces in 722. Interestingly, VOX began their campaign for the general elections of that year in the same place (Carvajal). VOX may have used this symbol to reference a new “reconquest” of Spain against the forces it believes defies national unity.

The party, which has recently won the third largest number of votes in the November 2019 Spanish election, an even bigger victory than the election in April of that same year, has been fueled by the Catalanian independence movement. The party has used growing regionalist movements and the threat of Islam to grow its base. The rise of this group, very similar to the rise of the Francoist movement in Spain, finds its basis in the demonization of other groups and increased conservatism. Spanish fascism, one that did not directly demonize a group of people, like Hitler did with the Jewish people, needed to find its basis in fear, just like VOX does today. VOX, while portraying itself as one that is basically conservative, heightens its support by portraying others (LGBT, Muslims, those in favor of regional independence) as ones that will

bring about the destruction of the nation. The party has also called for an influx of immigration from Latin America, as a sort of healthy reestablishment of the nation. This is similar to the idea of a pure Spanish race that Franco desired. VOX believes themselves to be the savior of the nation and finds that now is the time to take back the great land that has been stolen from them, much like the reconquest from the Muslims. Ultimately, VOX has built its basis through the threat of national unity that Catalonia's desire for independence and Basque terrorism propose while heightening the threat of other groups and portraying them as destroyers of the nation. While VOX has rejected any labeling of fascism, and even resists the term "far-right," its similarities to the Franco regime can be seen.

Growing movements also do exist in other nations, like AfD in Germany and Lega in Italy (Stile). While the party may not be extreme and may not want to create an authoritarian state as extreme as Franco's, its suppression of liberal ideals and rejection of human beings are cause for concern, as Spain moves farther right. The present thesis will examine the history of the Civil War and the Franco regime and try to understand the rise of different groups that rose opposed to the dictatorship, some violent, and some not, in order to understand its fascist history as a legacy that has influenced its political culture of today. The paper will also try to understand the factors that have played into VOX (memory crisis, Catalonia, left-wing shifts) in order to understand why VOX views themselves as what Spain needs in this moment. Spain may have moved on from its dictatorship, but its political phenomenon have not. Catalonia, not a group, but an entire region of the nation, represented, and still continues to represent, a major economic power of Spain. While Catalonia was mostly nonviolent in its approach to tackling fascism, it was still heavily repressed and faced major hardship during its time under the regime. Further, ETA, the Basque terrorist group founded in 1959 that began as a reaction to Franco and

participated in bombings, killings, and kidnappings, clung to its national identity in order to carry out its mission, which it believed it would accomplish through extreme violence. These instances are similar, in that they have strong roots in their autonomous identities, but had different purposes and goals. Catalonia, while desiring its independence and autonomy, did not have a main violent group that worked to provide this liberation. ETA, on the other hand, did not represent the whole view of the Basque Country, but represents an extreme reaction to repression and the ways in which initial reactions to repression can spur the radicalization of organizations.

The two groups show how repression can affect the political landscape of those opposed to repression and can polarize the people against what they deem unjust. In understanding the reactions of two autonomous communities, we can learn and understand how new right-wing groups emerge to combat what they view as being a threat to the unity of a country. VOX has emerged as a protection to Spain, a sort of crusader who wants to defend the sovereignty and unity of the area. To understand VOX in this way, it is also necessary to examine VOX from a less positive viewpoint, a right-wing group that desires a return to Francoist ideals and a reemergence of ideals that were staunchly opposed and silenced right after the regime ended. By examining the actions of the dictatorship in dealing with other fascist nations, such as Germany and Italy, as well as the treatment of groups opposed to it, it can become clear VOX's place in history and as a political organization more than forty years after the dictatorship. VOX uses rhetoric reminiscent of the Franco regime and these similarities must be addressed to understand its position in the current political climate.

### **Francoism & Fascist European Counterparts**

To understand VOX's relationship with other nations and populist movements, it is critical to understand how fascist movements were connected to one another in Europe before World War II. It is necessary to examine this past in order to understand how these movements may reemerge. While different from the regime of Adolf Hitler, Spain still saw its own rise of anti-Semitism. After the defeat of the Axis powers in World War II, Spain found some of its Falangists trying to increase membership and help the decreasing presence of fascism in Europe. One way it succeeded in doing this was through the hatred of the Jewish people. In the 1960s, with an increased rise of neo-Nazi groups, a neo-Nazi group in Spain also emerged, the *Círculo Español de Amigos de Europa*. The group, while sounding harmless, eventually grew from fascism to hatred of Jews, Blacks, Gypsies, and disabled people (Rodríguez-Jiménez 80). During the transition to democracy, the Spanish people were unable to bring forth candidates for the new elections, and this indecision was blamed on Jews, Masons, and Communists, a conspiracy known as the Jewish-Masonic conspiracy. These groups, similar to other European neo-Nazi groups, denied the Holocaust, and furthered their assertion that the Jewish people were working to undermine the legacy of Franco.

While right-wing groups today are not as extreme and do not express hatred for different groups of people, the fear of parties like VOX of Muslims and immigrants is one that can be interpreted as similar. People of Muslim faith, even in the United States, have been equated with terrorism, even though clearly not all Muslims have committed terrorist acts. Therefore, right-wing groups, like the neo-Nazi groups after World War II and VOX today, can find footing in their demonization of other groups. VOX has understood the threat of radical conservatism and has rejected fascism, but still holds beliefs similar to anti-Semitic or anti-liberal ideals of the twentieth century.

As discussed previously, Spain was obviously not the only fascist dictatorship during its time and was heavily influenced by the regimes of Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany. To begin and to understand VOX and previous fascist regimes, fascism must be defined: “fascism seems for a spiritual, economic and political revolution” (Albanese & del Hierro 1). Fascism cannot be contained in a single nation and the Spanish-Italian network that developed in the twentieth century represents its ability to reach and join nations. In 1922, Barcelona found itself with a population of Italians (5,000). Some of these Italians found themselves linked to their own nation and with four branches of the Fasci Italiani all’Estero in Spain. These factions, with the most important being found in Barcelona, found its platform and its acceptance with the presence of the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera. While Spanish and Italian fascist groups residing in Spain differed in their loyalty, they found links in their identities of Catholicism and Latin descendants of language. In 1926, Mussolini sent Ezio Maria Gray, a member of the National Directorate and the Grand Council of Fascism in order to understand fascism and authoritarianism in Spain.

On January 28, 1930, Primo de Rivera resigned after receiving little response from the military leaders who had previously supported his regime. After his resignation, republic factions joined together to overthrow the monarchy and establish a republic. They succeeded in March 1931, when elections resulted in the creation of the Second Republic. As a result, Mussolini and the Italian Fascists felt a strong blow from Spain, as they had lost their ally (Primo de Rivera) and faced an opposition of Italian fascism. A coup d’etat was attempted, but ultimately failed. The failed coup and the new subsequent effectivity of Italian Fascist groups in Spain caused Mussolini to take a more natural approach to his treatment of Spain. Therefore, fascism reemerged in Spain as one that would need to be based in its own nation: “Thus the idea of



fascism that Giménez Caballero was introducing into Spain was a synthesis of the main fascist ideas together with the pre-existing Spanish concepts in an attempt to provide the answer to a set of problems that were specifically national” (Albanese & del Hierro 25). Giménez Caballero, a writer and thinker that had established fascist connections, adapted the important concept of “Latinity” in Italian fascism to Hispanidad, which desired a fascist spread of ideals to the Hispanic community in Latin America. Mussolini found allies with the Renovación Española, whose leaders realized the need for a coup to end the Republic.

Later, Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of Miguel de Rivera, founded the Falange Española, and after an electoral defeat, joined with the Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista, another fascist party to form the FE-JONS party. At first, Primo de Rivera did not show strong support for the fascist regime in Italy. When faced with economic hardship, Primo de Rivera was provided with funds by Mussolini, but was forced to show allegiance with Italy. In 1936, Primo de Rivera met with Mussolini again, requesting aid for a coup in Spain. While it is unclear Mussolini’s reasons for intervening in the coup, he decided to provide aid in the form of airplanes and a ship, after hearing of Hitler’s support for a right-wing coup and France’s decision to not help the Republic. After the initial coup failed, Mussolini struggled with the decision to get involved in the conflict that would grow into a civil war or to stay out of conflict in the Iberian Peninsula.

Similarly to the ways in which Spanish fascism was tied to Italian fascism, the links between VOX and the organization that funded them, one based in France, can be seen. This initial support from an external power mirrors the fascist network that developed between Italy and Spain before the civil war, and represents the fact that extremist ideologies, whether they be

left or right, can find support in other nations. It is certainly frightening that the funding for this extreme right-wing group came from a previous terrorist organization.

### **Franco & the Coup d'etat**

The Franco regime is one that plagues the memory of Spaniards and the ways in which they deal with their government moving forward in history. While having to deal with this problematic past, the nation had tried to put a stop to any memory of the Civil War and the regime, with the *Pacto del Olvido*. Regardless, there is no way to truly forget the horrors that have plagued a nation and in dealing with the memory of the regime, strife and tension have occurred between the groups that desire different methods of remembrance. In viewing how a right-wing party emerges, one can examine the emergence of the past dictatorship to understand its appeal and rhetoric in coming to power.

The regime of Franco, unlike that of Hitler, built its base through the appeal of Catholicism. Further, Francisco Franco should not be viewed as the first fascist leader in Spain. Rather, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the founder of the Falange Española, should be looked at as the promoter of fascism. He believed in pairing fascism with religion in Spain: “For José Antonio, Catholicism was part of the patria, it was part of the Spanish character and could not be, nor was it desired to be sidelined” (Quiroga & del Arco 96). Further, he used religion to glorify the past and remind the Spanish people of their superiority: “Por su sentido de catolicidad, de universalidad, ganó España al mar y a la barbarie continentes desconocidos. Los ganó para incorporar a quienes los habitaban a una empresan universal de salvación” (Falange Española). Ultimately, Primo de Rivera and the Falange used religion to justify its hatred towards groups not deemed acceptably Spanish. The communists, or reds, as deemed by the newfound

Falangistas in Spain, were then found to be against religion, and therefore against the patria, as they disregarded Spain's glorious past. Interestingly enough, the Falange used a similar design as the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo in their flag, representing the Falange's knowledge of the appeal of the movement. Further, the Falange believed that in order for the nation to function, Spain needed to rid itself of the internal fighting that democracy promoted.

Francisco Franco, a Galician born soldier, soon found himself fighting in northern Morocco. In the army, he found himself developing an anti-liberal mindset and understood party systems and democracies to be the reason for Spain's continuing decline, including the loss of Cuba in 1898. Eventually, his appointment as a general in Morocco and his status as the Director General of the Military Academy of Zaragoza invoked his becoming "an increasingly cautious and calculating military leader" (Quiroga & del Arco 122). When socialists tried to block the entry of the Confederation of Autonomous Left-wing Parties into the cabinet, Franco, as general, was entrusted to crush the upset. Following a narrow victory by the liberal Popular Front and the assassination of the monarch, José Calvo Sotelo, Franco found the motivation necessary to carry out a coup. His coup, pitched as for God and the "patria," began in Morocco, and initially only succeeded in rural areas. After the deaths of more than 100,000, Franco claimed victory in April 1939. His regime was marked with unrest at its beginning and ending. During the Second World War, Franco resisted entrance into the war, as Spain was ravaged by its Civil War. Juan Antonio Suanzes, a key supporter of Franco and Minister of Industry and Commerce laid out the autarkic economy of Spain: "Autarky was, therefore, also a cultural and political programme that, isolating Spain from abroad and closing it in on itself, hopes to purify and regenerate it" (Quiroga & del Arco 161). Therefore, a right-wing group reminiscent of Franquismo must find

its identity in the rejection of those deemed as anti-Spanish, a belief in the past glory of Spain, a refocus on religion, and a nation with increased autonomy.

### **Memory of the Dictatorship**

One of the most striking things about the dictatorship of Franco is the way in which Spain has chosen to forget about the past. Spain may be dealing with this surge in right-wing ideals because it has been made to forget its past. This is the opposite of Germany, which even has a term for the process of working through and dealing with negative events in the past (Vergangenheitsbewältigung). Even those who witnessed the regime have elected to forget the troubling past. A 1981 survey conducted by Juan José Linz found that when asked to rate their attitude towards Franco (pro-Franco, anti-Franco), 32% of respondents, who were of the generation that experienced Franquismo selected “none” (Moradiellos 3). In surveys conducted in 2000, it was found that 20.6% of people did not know how Franco came to power and more than 50% rated him as being “good” or “fair.”

After the *Pacto del Olvido*, any kind of discussion about Franco-era crimes was criticized, with José María Aznar criticizing Felipe González, the respective leaders of the right-wing and socialist movements, and ““accused him of repeatedly violating the pact sealed during the transition not to stir up the past”” (Moradiellos 9). Santiago Carrillo, a communist leader, also supported the pact, saying that forgetting was a necessary path to democracy (Encarnación). The pact was then used as a tool to prevent democratic acceptance in the nation, while also forgetting the war and its crimes. This can seem problematic, but at the time, the agreement was a way to include all ideas in the nation and move forward from this dangerous past. Government leaders believed that this forgetting would curb animosity, but the reemergence of these issues is

troubling. Spain's government system shows the difficulty of getting past a fascist regime: "the obsession with unanimity in political decisions, the tendency to demonize conflict and differences, the inclination to identify government with nation, the massive growth of the executive against other state powers, the liking for charismatic leadership, the complacent towards corruption and venality, etc" (Moradiellos 14).

While the civil war and its tragedies may be suppressed, they cannot be erased and will return: "Bajo la ligera superficie de las versiones de la historia oficial, se encuentran aquellas historias que han sido silenciadas y borradas, dejando solo sus marcas fantasmales y, por lo tanto, destinadas a volver y atormentar al presente" (Colmeiro 33). A reason why VOX has been able to emerge is because this memory has not properly been addressed: "The situation of institutional neglect and oblivion of the victims of Francoism requires urgent judicial, political, and ethical measures to rectify the debt owed by the democratic state to the thousands of persons who were repressed, tortured, and killed by the dictatorship" (Rubin 215).

After the Civil War, when Franco was met with criticism of fascism and an increased desire for monarchy, he claimed that his Catholic regime was already developing and laying the groundwork for a Catholic and dignified state (Moradiellos 64). While not an official monarch, Franco executed his power as one, having full reign over the appointment of bishops and the passing of laws. In 1947, he passed the *Ley de Sucesión a la Jefatura del Estado*, to ensure that his successor would have power as a monarch. After the autarkic economy left Spain in ruin, Franco passed the *Plan de Estabilización* in 1959 to open Spain's economy abroad, freeze salaries, and devalue the peseta (Moradiellos 80).

During the dictatorship, but later into his rule, Franco faced a new enemy, ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna), an armed leftist group from the Basque country in the north of Spain. The group

sought to acquire independence from the nation and ultimately assassinated Luis Carrero Blanco, Franco's desired head of state after he died. After continued attacks in Madrid, with 12 killed and 60 injured in 1974, two ETA members and three FRAP (another antifascist group) members were executed (Moradiellos 93). This was met with criticism from international powers, but the assassination of Carrero Blanco and these brutal attacks forced Spain into democratic transition. After Franco's death on November 20th 1975, Juan Carlos took power as king.

Franco's regime still remains somewhat historically ambiguous, with many unsure how to address its forthcoming. Ultimately, Franquismo is either understood as a traditionally conservative military dictatorship or a new fascist and totalitarian regime that was seen in Europe at the time (Moradiellos 155). Regardless, Franco's regime, one of the last dictatorships at the time of his death in 1975, represents years of repression and the terror and destruction that can come out of it. Fascist regimes, like those of Franco's, may try their best to rid themselves of external influence and be as oppressive as possible, but Franco's decreased restriction of Spain's economy in the 50s to save a struggling Spain and his ultimate decision to elect a monarch to head Spain after his death represent the inability of fascism and authoritarianism to create this complete and total obedience that it desires. Therefore, VOX as a representative of right-wing groups is reminiscent of the ways in which those with dissenting opinions were treated. When people's beliefs are threatened, terror may grow, as will be seen later, in the case of ETA.

### **CNT & Anarchist Traditions**

In understanding the hold of right-wing groups during Franquismo and after its demise, it is important to examine those groups who suffered as a result of the dictatorship and were even punished so much as to go into exile. By understanding how these groups were mistreated,

violence can be avoided. The Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, a group consisting of 140 trade unions, was founded in Barcelona in October/November 1910 (Torres 1). The group was founded on action against syndicalism, federalism and anti-politicism. The group also had semi-communist ideals, such as a focus on the group and community. In 1917, it participated in a strike against the monarchy, but this ultimately failed. In 1919, another strike occurred in Barcelona in which protesters rallied against an electrical company. Eventually, the strikers won and the authorities were forced to negotiate. During the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, union work was halted in 1924. The Federación Anarquista Ibérica was founded in 1927, and hoped to bring down the regime in favor of a Republic. In Barcelona, voters voted for Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, which ultimately overthrew the King in 1931. In 1936, CNT held a congress, but surprisingly did not mention the situation in Spain and the rise of fascism.

The CNT was a major force in fighting against fascism, but was defeated as Franco and the fascist regime won the Civil War. Libertarians began to be exiled throughout France, England, Mexico, and North Africa. As a result, the leadership committees of the CNT and similar organizations merged to create the Consejo General del Movimiento Libertario. The defeat of left-leaning groups during the war led these combined leaderships to reevaluate their goals and create a more realistic goal of a federal socialist republic. After the victory of the nationalists, Franco refused to negotiate with the National Defense Council, which was the sole representative of the Republican Spain. Franco created the Law of Political Responsibilities in 1939, which banned republican parties and suspended democratic rights. The Falange Tradicionalista de las Jons, the only legal political party, was created and combined all forces on the right. In 1940, a Special Tribunal for the Repression of Freemasonry and Communism was created, allowing for the extermination of Republicans. It is estimated that 250 executions of

Republicans took place daily during this time. In Alicante, 30,000 fleeing Republicans were stranded when ships to transport them failed to arrive. Many took their own lives, while the rest were taken to the concentration camp of Los Almendros, where they were not given food or shelter, and were killed in Falange firing squads by night. Members of the CNT were forced to eat trade union cards, denied work, and were vetted to make sure they were worthy of employment. During this time, disease (typhoid, dysentery, tuberculosis, and diphtheria) threatened the population and hunger was rampant. Republican soldiers also formed guerrilla armies to escape the terror of the regime. After the fall of Catalonia in 1939, 450,000 Spanish citizens fled to France, with 80,000 members being of the CNT. The French also treated the exiles poorly, left them without blankets or food, and subjected them to a prison regime. Those that fled back to Spain were killed.

Regardless, CNT organizations began to reform themselves in the camps. Organizations also took place in Valencia, but these committees were destroyed in 1940. Further, groups were created to publish and falsify documents, as well as create escape routes to France and communicate with exiled organizations. Republicans and members of the CNT also joined opposition efforts against the Nazi control of France, increasing the membership of the group even further. CNT efforts increased during the second World War, as it was believed that an Allied victory might lead to the end of Francoism. After the war, while Francoism did not end, workers' groups further gained strength and it can be said that this time was a transitional period for Spain. After the war, the Cold War and the threat of communism became another big issue. Franco was not viewed as a threat by outside powers during this time, as his regime aimed to put an end to communism. He unleashed more suppression on left-wing groups at a time in which



Socialists were negotiating with Monarchists. After reaching an agreement, though, Franco enacted the Law of Succession, which gave power to a monarchy after his death.

In 1951, protests occurred against bus fares. In the first strike since 1939, over 300,000 workers boycotted the bus system in Barcelona, and another boycott occurred in Madrid. Major strike action occurred in 1956, the year of mass student protests, and in 1962, a 300,000-worker strike in 28 provinces caused a state of emergency to be declared. After these protests, the Regime was forced to negotiate with workers for the first time. Eventually, the CNT reunited in 1961, and the group opposed the armed revolution of left-wing groups that was occurring during this time, by groups such as ETA. During the 1960s and 70s, anarchism rose again, mostly because of a development of the New Left in Europe. This movement was Marxist, but was critical of the Soviet Union and was open to examining other socialist alternatives. The Workers' Commission was created in 1962 and began to participate in mass demonstrations. In 1966, the Franco Regime began to repress the group and they were declared illegal in 1968. This repression represented the still-present reaches of the dictatorship and the difficulty to integrate a working class into a heavily militarized government.

In the early 70s, the dictatorship began to experience a crisis, as those in the country and outside were opposed to the dictatorship and its cruel tactics. Further, the Catholic Church began to split away from the regime and asked for the forgiveness of the Spanish people for what it had done during the war. Regardless, repression resulted in the deaths of more people from 1969 to 1975 in strikes and protests than earlier in the 1960s. The violence that occurred during this time represented a turning point for the dictatorship and demonstrated its ability to use repression as reaction, without any effective political strategy. During this time, Salvador Puig Antich, a member of the Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación was executed for the death of a policeman, the

last execution of the regime. Further, the regime did not understand the difficulty of allowing a society to modernize itself while being restricted by a military dictatorship. At the time, a new constitutional framework was proposed, which included the naming of Juan Carlos as Franco's successor. This tactic of allowing Franco to name his successor gave the government some democratic legitimacy while also ensuring that the legacy of the dictatorship would continue. The Burgos trial of 1970, which spelled the death of six ETA members and the sentence of over 700 years for the others bred strong protests against the regime. Tension also increased with the honorary consul of Germany was abducted by ETA and threatened with death if the death sentences were carried out. The German government also threatened sanctions if the executions were carried out. Even though the regime was humiliated after this loss, repression and the growth of right-wing groups occurred.

Solidaridad was another group founded on left-wing ideals and aimed to build an alternative method of analysis to Marxism. They proposed education as a way of weakening government. The group also wanted to move beyond economic demands and create a socio-political movement against capitalism and the state. At this point, demonstrations had forced the regime to only be able to rely on pure, violent repression to prevent any kind of opposition. Even though this was the only tactic left, expression still served to radicalize anti-Francoist opposition. In 1972, the managing director of the Precicontrol Company, Zabala, was kidnapped and released once he had reinstated 183 workers that had been fired for striking for increased wages. 1972 was the hottest year for university action and universities had been occupied since 1968, when police were introduced on a permanent basis. The medical faculty of Madrid University was closed for five months and the autonomy of Madrid and Barcelona universities were suspended for a year. Right-wing groups grew during this time, such as Cruz Ibérica and the

Círculo de Amigos de Europa, with used Nazi slogans, attacked progressive priests, and carried out bank hold ups. Authorities were usually complicit in these actions, leading to increased tension, and ultimately the 1973 killing of a policeman at the May Day demonstration in Madrid.

Increased polarization caused Carrero Blanco to take charge of the government that month. At the time, talks of moderating the government by Francoist elites against repression as well as increasing awareness of socialist and communist parties occurred. When Carrero Blanco was killed by ETA, this was a major point of transition from dictatorship to democracy, as a state of emergency was not declared and the army was not utilized. After this, those of the opposition began to talk with Franco-reformists as it was realized that Francoism would not be able to persist without Franco.

After the death of Franco, the government did not make drastic changes. The extreme right and the oligarchy continued to function, while the army did not change. Arias Navarro, the prime minister under Franco created a cabinet dominated by staunch supporters of the regime, showing his intention to preserve its legacy. Initially, there was not a desire of amnesty for political prisoners, which became a major mobilizing issue for those opposed to Franco. The King had a difficult job, in that he did not want to anger the right by moving towards democracy but had also vowed to uphold Francoist laws. In January of 1976, 350,000 Metro workers went on strike in Madrid, which in turn affected all sectors of the Spanish economy. Many workers, even though not directly affected by the issues, went on strike in solidarity. After the strikes, no workers were dismissed nor deemed traitors by the government, representing a growth of power of working-class individuals.

Ultimately, CNT disbanded in 1979 after a steep decline in labor and a reduction of the radical. Regardless, the organization represents the inability of suppression of collective groups

who suffered as a result of the regime. CNT, like the case of Catalonia and ETA, contributes to the growing evidence that the Franco regime was not able to participate in as much suppression as it thought possible. In relationship to VOX, it also shows how left-wing or other oppressed groups react to the desire to silence their voices. The *Pacto del Olvido*, while well-intended, mostly caused more discord among those in the government.

The lack of knowledge about Franco and the generally indifferent impressions of Spaniards concerning the regime are certainly concerning, as the dictatorship was extremely bloody and difficult for those that went through it. The internment of those deemed communist by the regime represents a blemish on the face of a nation that is the second largest in terms of tourism. In nations with this troublesome past, it is important for human rights to be examined and respected, as they are what leads to the rich diversity of a country. VOX has extremely striking similarities to the ideals of the Franco regime, like a rejection of those foreign to the country, a rejection of those not dubbed to have family values, women's rights, and the sovereignty of autonomous communities. The rejection of those with opposing viewpoints coupled with the extreme fear VOX uses in order to force Spaniards to believe that there is a problem in their nation is the same fear-mongering tactic that Franco used to gain power at the end of the 1940s. Right-wing populism, as a phenomenon not just in Spain, represents the demonization of those deemed as the other. The fear of the unknown, which Franco used and VOX uses today, are highly effective because they create a disconnect between reality and fiction. These groups probably do not pose as big of a threat as they are made out to be, but when presented as groups that want to destroy Spain, its economy, and way of life, the Spanish people, and those of any nation, are quick to outcast and look down upon them.

## **ETA's Terrorism**

Another unfortunate occurrence that came out of the Franco regime is the ETA terrorist organization from País Vasco. ETA represents the violent reaction to repression and the dangers of political suffocation by a certain party. There are two main arguments to the creation of ETA, one concerning an ethnic conflict between Basques and Spaniards, and another concerning the genocide of the Basque people following the Spanish Civil War (Fernandez 19). The total number of those believed to be killed by the regime in the Basque country is between 1,600 and 1,800. Initially, nationalism had been passed down generationally. While culture and heritage were passed down, the Basque language began to deteriorate as a result of repression by the Franco regime. In the 1950s and 60s, with the changed economic policy, immigrants from other parts of Spain arrived in the Basque country, leading to xenophobic rejection.

The initial members of ETA were breakaway militants of a student organization, known as Ekin. They initially declared that they were heirs to the trajectory of the Basque government and defined themselves as “a patriotic, apolitical, secular and democratic organization that defended the right to self-determination” (Fernandez 22). There was tension between ETA and the Partido Nacionalista Vasco, with ETA accusing PNV of being inefficient, and the PNV labeling ETA as fascist. In December 1959, ETA planted explosives at a police station in Bilbao and a newspaper in Santander. In 1961, they burnt three Spanish flags in San Sebastián and tried to derail a train carrying Francoist veterans. After this, some members escaped to France and the movement became aimed at creating an independent nation, which would only speak Basque and be democratic. The group initially rejected communism and Marxism, until *Vasconia*, written by Frederico Krutwig, lowered the distrust of Marxism and created the necessity to defeat two

powers, France and Spain. A report was later created that proposed a guerrilla war to seize power and defeat national armies, at the third assembly of ETA.

The founders of ETA were expelled from the French Basque Country and lost control of the group, and the group was then given to a Third Worldist figure (that is, desiring unity during the Cold War) and a leader of the workist faction. They changed the strategy and ideology of ETA, proposing a revolutionary war, which would provoke police repression to the Basque population, thus causing Basque support for the war. For this to work, Basque leaders understood the fact that ETA would need to be able to withstand the action of the police. After the appointment of the leaders, ETA also desired the creation of a socialist society. In this time, the goal of ETA changed from nationalism to socialism, because of the possibility of social liberation within Spain.

One main problem that the organization faced was a lack of money, and they robbed a bank in 1965 to gain this. It did not end well, and multiple leaders of the organization fled Spain. The new leader of the group, Patxi Iturriz, desired a workerist evolution of the organization and tried to defend workers' interests, and also rejected linguistically-based nationalism and anti-Spanish desires. He also desired the rejection of xenophobic rejection of immigrants. Overall, this was not met well and infuriated the military of Xabier Zumalde who split away from ETA in 1966, causing a defamation campaign against him. At the fifth assembly of ETA, those who were apart of the workers' faction were expelled and the leaders were sentenced to death. Ultimately, the leaders were not killed, but intense persecution and harassment toward those of this faction was carried out. Those that declared this sentence feared that ETA would create an organization similar to the Partido Socialista Obrero Español. In the second part of the fifth assembly, the Third Worldist ideology, that is remaining non-aligned during the Cold War, became supreme.

Further, ETA began calling itself the Basque Socialist National Liberation Organization, and adopted revolutionary nationalism. Thus, ETA became focused on liberating itself from the bourgeoisie and from Spain through an armed struggle. The ethno-nationalist tendency was abandoned, as this did not fall in line with the Third World ideology.

At first, violence created by ETA took place in robberies and bombings against symbols of the Franco regime. In 1968, ETA decided to assassinate the heads of the Political-Social Brigade of Bilbao and San Sebastián. Ultimately, these both failed and a popular leader, Txabi Etxebarrieta, shot a member of the Guardia Civil in the back and then was killed. Another leader, Iñaki Sarakseta, was sentenced to prison and released in 1977. After the events, ETA portrayed Etxebarrieta as a martyr for the cause, instead of a murderer. After this, they were committed to violence as a means of vengeance. In 1968, they assassinated Melitón Manzanas, the head of San Sebastián's Political-Social Brigade, who was well-known as a professional torturer of the Franco regime. A decree law was issued on the repression of terrorism, and later, over 3,000 people, many unrelated to ETA, were arrested in the Basque Country.

At this point, ETA split into two factions, and ETA VI ultimately was wiped out, as it failed at freeing leaders who had been arrested, with its own leaders being arrested. Further, ETA V, the other faction, was able to kidnap the consul of the German Federal Republic. Regardless, ETA V needed support, and gained this when three leaders accused of the assassination of Manzanas were given a double death sentence. This led to demonstrations by anti-Francoists, forcing Franco to commute the sentence, but also causing a movement towards radical Basque nationalism. After this point, ETA joined with a radicalized sector of the PNV's youth organization, leading to increased terrorist attacks, almost 240 in eight years. In 1973, ETA

assassinated Luis Carrero Blanco, the head of the Spanish government, marking the high point of ETA's campaign.

During the dictatorship, ETA killed 43 people. In 1974, a sector of the workers' front of the organization broke away from ETA, as it was not possible to separate themselves from the violence that was being created by the organization. On September 13, 1974, ETA planted a bomb in a cafeteria in Madrid. This resulted in the deaths of 12 people and wounded 70 others. This attack, aimed at the police, only resulted in the death of one police officer. The military front, which was told to not take responsibility for the attack then broke away from ETA. This ETA Militar was transformed into an army and committed itself to terrorist violence. During the transition, violence continued, and 336 people died in the Basque Country and Navarre as a result of terrorism. ETA called for a boycott of the new elections, but this had little effect.

In 1978 with the approval of the Spanish Constitution, the Amnesty Law in 1977 was aimed at defeating terrorism and providing amnesty for political prisoners, including terrorists. Regardless, ETA refused to stop carrying out acts of terrorism. They also rejected becoming an autonomous community within Spain, and desired full independence. They also believed the new democratic government to be a disguised dictatorship. They then declared a war that lasted until the mid 90s, with the intention to kill as many members of the police and armed forces as possible. ETA believed that their demands would be met, to prevent a coup, but the failed coup attempt in 1981 proved that they would not get the independence that they desired. Interestingly, during this time there were two factions of ETA, the ETA-Militar and the ETA-Político Militar. The latter focused on Marxism as well and still believed in the mass struggle of the people of the Basque Country, rather than the armed struggle of the former. ETA-PM ultimately killed 21 people and started a campaign against tourism in 1979. It planted over a dozen bombs in towns



on the coast of Spain, but warned police of times and locations of the explosions, to prevent victims. They called for a transferring of jailed prisoners in Soria to the Basque Country, but authorities did the opposite, transferring prisoners in the Basque Country to Soria. As a result, ETA planted bombs in the Barajas Airport and two railway stations in Madrid, resulting in the deaths of seven people and injury of over 100, as a phone call only gave warning of an imminent explosion. ETA-PM deactivated remaining bombs and provided their locations to the police.

In 1981, ETA-PM declared a truce. ETA-PM split in two, with one faction desiring the reintegration of its members into society and another desiring the continued fight. ETA-M and the new ETA-PM then joined with the Comandos Autónomos Anticapitalistas, another terrorist organization, which then killed a socialist senator and an affiliate of the PSOE. Between 1975 and 1995, ETA was supported by members of the Basque population and was believed to be capable of damaging Spain. The years between 1976 and 1981 were the worst years of ETA, with the organization making headlines weekly. In 52 years, ETA as a whole killed 845 people, with ETA-M being responsible for 92% of these. The most brutal attacks by ETA included the attack at the República Dominicana Square in Madrid in 1986 (12 deaths), the bombing of the Hipercor Supermarket in Barcelona in 1987 (21 deaths), the attacking of the Guardia Civil Compounds in Zaragoza in 1987 (11 deaths), and in Vic in 1991 (ten deaths).

The final period of ETA from 1995 to 2011 came with the realization that they would not be able to defeat the central government, due to effective counterterrorism and a lack of public support of their violent acts. In 2007, only 23 percent of Basques viewed ETA as favorable. Starting in 1995, ETA targeted those of non-nationalist parties in order to polarize them. One turning point of this strategy occurred in 1997, when ETA kidnapped Miguel Ángel Blanco, a town councilor in a Basque town. Their demands were to transfer all ETA inmates to jails close

to the Basque Country in 48 hours or Blanco would be killed. Despite protests, Blanco was killed. This induced increased demands for the ending of violence by ETA, due to a disconnect between the Basque people and ETA. The Pact of Estella also created polarization between nationalists and non-nationalists, as a ceasefire was negotiated behind the back of constitutionalism political parties.

Finally, international occurrences, like the negotiation of Israel and Palestine, the ceasefire of IRA, an Irish terrorist group, and the 9/11 attacks, which ended the positive view of terrorism as a means of negotiation, led to the decreased ability of justification of political violence. Overall, ETA continued functioning for so long during the transition because they believed that significant changes had not occurred after the dictatorship to warrant a democracy. Cases of maltreatment by those in police custody were not uncommon. Also, the tactic of dispersing prisoners begot criticism from the Basque people, as this also separated families.

The catalyst for counterterrorism against ETA occurred in 1992 with the arrests of the leaders of the organization by the French police. This was particularly striking due to the cooperation between the Spanish and French. French and Spanish cooperation was vital in weakening the organization, as France had previously been viewed as a place of asylum. Due to fears of an attack at the 1992 Olympic Games, the two countries continued to devote resources to fight the organization. During these times, the banning of parties close to ETA appeared effective. Further, anti-ETA pacts were signed and an Anti-Terrorist pact was eventually created in 2000.

The third reason for the decline was the Law of Political Parties in 2002, which allowed the government to outlaw political organizations with links to terrorist organizations. Initially, it was criticized by Basque leaders and believed that it would create more violence, but reduced

terrorism by decreasing social support and funding. While the legality and appropriateness were debated, the European Court of Human Rights declares its legitimacy in 2009. This prompted a great reduction in public support. Between 2005 and 2007, negotiations took place to end the violence, with 9/11 as a backdrop and a previous truce causing the government to believe that ETA would disband. In 2006, ETA abandoned any chance of negotiation, with an explosion of a van in a car park of the Barajas Airport in Madrid. The Spanish government refused to negotiate further and declared counter-terrorism the only effective measure against the organization. The organization was further disconnected from the Basque people, as any chance of negotiation for prisoners was abandoned. This ultimately led to increased legitimacy of the government, and ETA ended its campaign on October 20, 2011 (Muro).

It is also important to understand ETA during the Franco regime. Most groups had abandoned the armed struggle against the Franco regime, until the 1968 murder of a Corporal of the Guardia Civil. This shocked the regime, leading to the call to use any means necessary to destroy the separatist terrorist process. After the death of Manzananas, a number of ETA members and some who were not connected to the organization were arrested. Further, the police began to use excessive force against demonstrations and protests, including one in which two people were killed at a protest of gas emissions from a factory. A National Intelligence Service was created to investigate and curb outbreaks of terrorism. Terrorist activity heightened, and during the transition, ETA declared that they would not abandon violence during the transition to democracy. The Guardia Civil, in the first year of the transition killed five workers at a peaceful workers' meeting in a church and shot a young boy in a demonstration against these events.

Even though the Law of Amnesty was predicted to end terrorist violence, ETA was still aimed at destroying the newfound democracy. Initially, it also represented the inability to create

an effective anti-terrorist strategy and to involve France in the fight. The police began to treat Basque people and those they believed to be associated with ETA very poorly, including choking by immersion, beating, and foot whipping, showing that the links to the dictatorship were not completely gone, even during the transition. In February 1981, a member of ETA-M, José Arregui was tortured to death by the police. In May of that same year, three boys were mistaken for ETA members who had recently carried out a terrorist attack and were tortured, murdered, dismembered, and burnt by members of the Guardia Civil. Even though the officers were imprisoned, they still received favorable treatment in prison and were provided with money while suspended from their jobs. ETA continued to participate in terrorist acts, eventually raping and murdering two young girls, in its year of most extreme violence. The Anti-terrorist Liberation Group was then created in Spain after the victory of PSOE. The group committed several errors while in effect, including arresting and convicting a French citizen of Spanish descent who was not involved with ETA. Further, the group murdered the leader of Herri Batasuna (the political sector of ETA), which was met with strong reaction and undermined the legitimacy of the Spanish government. Finally, the group murdered an elderly man and a young girl who were not involved with ETA at all.

A success occurred in 1992, with the arrest of the entirety of the ETA leadership in France. This set off the destruction of their financial infrastructure and caused the organization to lack funding. Due to the Barcelona Olympic Games and the Seville Expo, increased collaboration with the French and Spanish government to stop terrorism was put into place. In 1993, the authorities dismantled an important arms and explosives factory in France. France continued collaborating with Spain in exchange for Spain remaining vigilant of potential Islamic terrorism that might cross the border. After learning of Anti-terrorist Liberation Groups

wrongdoings and their possible embezzlement of public funds, the relationship between the two countries deteriorated. The rejection of ETA increased when security forces freed José Antonio Ortega Lara and ETA murdered town councilor Miguel Ángel Blanco, even though it knew that the Spanish government would not give into its demands, which were sending political prisoners to prisons near the Basque country. In examining ETA's politics and violence, it is important to recognize the fact that the coup that started the civil war in 1936 was one that was done against the will of over half of the Spanish population. Similarly, ETA used this fact to justify its violence and clung to the idea that violence was necessary to create the change that they desired. ETA relied on the dehumanization of its victims and transferred its responsibility to these victims for their collaboration or actions which went against the desires of ETA.

The ETA conflict represents the history and the trauma left by the Franco regime. Like the situation of Catalonia, this strife and growing conflict between left-wing and right-wing groups develops out of an intense repression and the desire for revenge that the murders and exiles of those who have different beliefs can create. ETA demonstrates the death and destruction that took place almost thirty years after the regime, and the fact that resentment towards those who will do anything to gain power will last well after that power is gone. As we have seen, in the case of the transition and ETA's campaign well into the transition, democracy is something that is extremely fragile and totalitarian tendencies must be consciously broken in order to preserve this system of government. It is exceptionally difficult to understand who is to be blamed for these occurrences, as it could be said that Catalonia did not turn to violence as a result of their repression, and the Basque Country could have done the same. On the other hand, the government chose to ignore the crimes of the dictatorship after it was over, granting pardons to those involved and trying to eliminate any memory of Francoism. In the *Silence of Others*,

relatives of those who were murdered by the Franco regime sought justice after the *Pacto de Olvido*. The people who seek justice travel to Argentina to pursue a lawsuit that would make the crimes the regime committed prosecutable. The documentary also discusses the fact that babies were stripped from their mothers who were deemed to be “reds” and given to members in support of the regime. Eventually, justice was served, torturers of the regime were imprisoned, and those who requested exhumation of their loved ones were provided with this. The Spanish government tried to prevent this, even prohibiting Spanish citizens who were involved in the case from being present in an initial hearing in Argentina through video conference, by saying that this would be breaking an agreement between the two nations.

It is extremely difficult to come to terms with the past, and the memories of Franco and his regime are ones that we would like to forget, as they represent the atrocities humankind will commit, even in modern times. This fear of digging up the past and addressing those crimes is a reason why VOX has been able to survive. The disregard of those whose lives were taken under the dictatorship permits the rejection of human life once again: “The crime of forced disappearance involves not only a murder but also the severing of the deceased from any relationship with the state” (Rubin 221). The robbing of the identities of those affected by the dictatorship, even after, demonstrates Spain’s crippling fear of addressing its past. Today, those convicted of rebellion under the regime have not had the crimes alleviated or addressed: “By highlighting the errors in these documents—from the mundane spelling mistake to the offensive historical category—memory activists call attention to a postfascist state that is unwilling to correct even the most basic historical wrongs of its dictatorial predecessor” (Rubin 220). Spain’s forgetting of its past and its abrupt transition infuses the spirit of Francoism, transforms the Spanish government into one that has not been held accountable for its actions, and allows VOX

to take advantage of a society that has not addressed and reconciled with its wrongdoings. VOX is not solely a phenomenon of its past, and like any political group, is a reaction to its present. VOX, if we understand it in the same way we understand Catalonia and ETA, as products of a fascist regime, it can be said that the political party was formed as a result of disenchantment with the increased liberty and desires of these regions. Therefore, the lines between right-wing and left-wing extremist ideals can be understood as a cycle, which cannot be balanced. Catalonia desired its independence even before the war, and the repression which aimed to suppress this desire, did exactly the opposite. Therefore, when VOX and right-wing groups in the future resurge, they come as a response to the threat of a divided nation. ETA and Catalonia both represent the desire to split the nation, and while it can be understood why they desire their independence, they are viewed as malicious because they want to change the status-quo that has existed within the country. Right-wing ideals, like the rejection of immigrants, exist as a result of a perceived threat of these groups, even if it does not actually exist.

### **The Catalonia Crisis**

Catalonia represents an endemic problem for the homogeneous unity of the Spanish nation, and its roots need to be understood in order to understand its current battle between independence and remaining a part of the nation. VOX initially became known after the Catalanian independence referendum in 2017. The referendum, which was deemed illegal by the national government, was conducted by asking Catalonians if they desired the independence of the autonomous community. The central government then directly fought against this, sending troops from Madrid and using violence to contain riots in the streets. This declaration of independence was ultimately suspended, and Catalonia was forced to remain a part of Spain,

even though it had been decided that Catalonia would transition to becoming its own nation. Two years later, in October 2019, 12 government leaders of the independence movement were tried and nine were found guilty, serving sentences between 9 and 13 years. As a result, more than 525,000 protesters took to the streets of Barcelona in protest of the jailing. In the Catalanian situation, VOX desires an authoritarian and nationalistic approach to the conflict. VOX also desires a suspension of the ability of any other regions of Spain to declare independence (Turnbull-Dugarte 3). Ultimately, Catalonia's independence represents a threat to the unity of Spain and also to its economy, as Barcelona has the largest GDP of the nation (Di Giuro 15).

VOX bases its ideology strongly in the idea of immigration and xenophobia: "VOX divides it into a bad and a good migration, depending on the country the migrants come from. If they are from countries like South America, whose culture and history is strictly connected with the Spanish one, then this migration is a good one, and should be supported by the government. If, on the opposite side, we are dealing with an African or Arabian migration, then VOX asks for a lot of restrictions, since they believe this culture is too different and will not be able to integrate and will absorb the Spanish culture" (Di Giuro 16).

Among other fears and denials, VOX fears those of a different race, harkening back to Al-Andalus and the Muslim influence from more than a thousand years ago. Similar to the situation in Catalonia, VOX desires a strong national identity, one that preserves its legacy and heritage. After the Catalonia incident, VOX sued the parliament of Catalonia. Clearly, VOX is anti-secessionist, and sees the independence movement as a threat to national unity and to the country as a whole. It is evident that VOX has used fear in order to grow its voter base. Recently, VOX was opposed to the exhumation of Franco's body.



Catalonia, while seemingly unrelated to the issues of right-wing nationalism in Spain, represents the antithesis of VOX and other conservative groups. The Catalanian issue did not start with the referendum, but has its roots even before the Civil War. During the early twentieth century, Catalonia had developed a sense of nationalism and an anarchist movement, until Franco ultimately won the Civil War, leading to the suppression of these ideals. Interestingly, Catalonia was able to preserve some of its identity through the Catalanian church. The church allowed for masses in Catalan and texts began to be published in the 1950s through the church. Catalonia, as the center of modernity in Spain, came to be a threat to the idea of Spanish nationalism. Catalan nationalism, at its beginning, was found as a contrast to labor. In Marxist ideals, nationalism (of Spain, in this case), was deemed as “a tool of the bourgeoisie to distract the masses” (Dowling 10). Catalanian independence, like the three-stage theoretical model established by Hroch, consisted of a dissemination of linguistic and cultural attributes, an emergence of thinkers to increase nationalism, and a mass movement which creates different political identities.

In 1885, the Lliga de Catalunya, led by Valentí Almirall, a Federalist, published a commitment to nationalism, called the Memorial de Greuges (Report of Grievances), which was then presented to Alfonso XII, the King of Spain, at the time. The document desired the maintenance of the Catalan Legal Code and a protection of Catalan industry. This upset the government of Madrid, even though Catalonia professed its loyalty to Spain within the document. After the loss of Cuba, Catalonia became more strongly tied to Spain due to its loss of one of its main receivers of exports. In 1914, after factions had existed with Catalonia, the Mancomunitat was created to promote Catalan culture and a consolidation of the region. The dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, who was initially seen as the savior of Catalonia and Spain,

abolished the Mancomunitat and saw to the ending of the Barcelona Football Club and the Catalan Choral Society, therefore causing desire for Catalan autonomy to grow. The Civil War fought in Catalonia was different from the rest of Spain because there was conflict between the Generalitat of Catalonia and the government of the Republic, the revolution and the republicans, and the anti-Catalanism of Franco's military.

After major destruction of the church in Catalonia by the left, Catalonia saw hope in the victory of the nationalists. Catalans were viewed then as communists and separatists. After the war, Franco demanded that all communities in Spain speak the same language and have one “personality.” The granting of autonomy to Catalonia in 1932 was viewed as a threat to the integrity of Spain. Franco viewed Catalonian independence as in the way of emulating other regimes such as the ones of Italy and Germany. Further, Franco and his supporters believed that regionalism was of the contributing factors to the hardships Spain had faced and that Spain would become homogeneous under the regime. While the regime did not directly condemn the use of Catalan, an article threatened the dismissal of civil servants for the use of the language.

Between 1938 and 1953, 4,000 individuals in Catalonia were executed. Further, large numbers of people from Esquerra Republicana, the hegemonic Catalan political party of the Second Republic, were sent to prisons or labor camps. Also after the war, the Catholic Church focused on rebuilding itself. Over 4,000 churches were destroyed in the region, and as a result of their reconstruction, the sardana (a traditional Catalonian dance) reappeared. In the 1940s, during the Second World War, Catalonian exiles had optimism to return to their homes, as they believed a defeat of the Axis powers would lead to the overthrow of Franco. While this did not occur, Catalonia saw a reemergence of its cultural identity, such as the Choral Society in 1946 and the sardana. The 1950s saw the rise of the first generation that had not been born during the Civil

War and faced student opposition, a protesting working class, and opposition from peripheral nationalisms. In 1957, when Franco was forced to announce the failure of his autarkic economic policy, Catalonia declared its rejection of the dictatorship, calling it bad for the economy of the nation. After this, the Spanish economy had no choice but to enter into the world economy and liberalize itself. At the same time, Catalonia faced a second rebirth and growth in art, music, writing, and theatre, coinciding with the boom of the Spanish economy.

The case of Catalonia, with its suppressed and reemerging nationalist movements once again represents the inability of repressive and extremist groups to oppress identity on the other side. While it is clear that VOX is not as extreme as a fascist regime, its newfound opposition to the increasing push for Catalanian independence represents the suppression that has always formed against it. VOX, if it is seen as a threat in the same way, may not attack Catalonia's linguistic or cultural freedom, but looks down upon it and make enemies of the Catalan people, simply for being Catalanian. If anything, the case of Catalonia demonstrates the inability of complete suppression of any group of people that desires autonomy. It is no coincidence that the most prestigious national intellectual, José Ortega Gasset, in 1932 commented on the Catalan problem, saying that it cannot be resolved, only tolerated and represents a particular feeling of wanting to live apart from the rest of Spain (Escartín Sánchez 108). Looking to the past, Catalonia is a prime example of the inability of the Franco regime to wipe out autonomous sentiment completely and even in a time of intense conservatism, the ability of free-thinking ideas to emerge and thrive.

### **Catalonia & Protest Through the 1992 Olympic Games**

Moving past the idea of Catalonia having its independence, even before and clearly during the

war, one event after the war increased talks concerning autonomy: the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. Marxism, while controversial in Spain, also mentioned the idea of sport: “Sport provides a ready vehicle for diffusing nationalist ideology to the masses and diverting them from their true interests: “(Hargreaves 3). Sport in different cultures represents the complex history and individual character of the nation. For instance, Britain used athleticism and sports to disguise its racist imperialism, as social Darwinism persisted under this system.

During the Franco regime, the dictatorship took over the Spanish League clubs to create a sort of “religion” in which propaganda could be presented through ritual of sport. Sport and nationalism are linked as sport can preserve cultural traditions as a nation modernizes. In times of hardship, Catalonians were able to preserve traditional cultures to affirm themselves politically. Olympism represents the globalization and liberalization of nations, and therefore, after fascist regimes, represents a return to a more neutral stance in world affairs, while at the same time representing the pride in the culture of a nation.

The bid for Barcelona to host the 1992 Olympic Games started in 1981 by the socialist mayor of Barcelona, Narcís Serra. After an attempted military coup had taken place in the region, Serra thought that Catalonia needed a morale booster during the difficult transition to democracy. Serra received support of the king and all levels of the government in Spain for the bid. The Olympic Games were seen as a way for Spain, on the national level, to prove that it had modernized and matured after the dictatorship. On the regional level, the creators of the project believed that the Games might be a way to remedy the situation with the center of Spain and allow it to extract some of the resources from Catalonia that it thought it deserved from the most economically prosperous region in the country. Catalan lawmakers also had an agenda: they believed that the games could enhance the economy and autonomy of the community, while also

modernizing the urban infrastructure of Barcelona. There would be clear agendas at play here: one from the nationalist Catalonia, one from the socialist Spain, and one from the socialist Barcelona.

Another issue leading up to the Games was how Catalonia would be allowed to present its cultural symbols. A Catalan Olympic Committee was formed in order to oppose the Spanish Olympic Committee and allow for a separate Catalonian team to participate in the games apart from Spain. A resistance of the mascot for the games, because it did not represent Catalonia well, heightened fears of a failure of the Games. Further, there was fear of terrorist activity, specifically from ETA, during the games. This intense fear put in motion Operación Garzón, which aimed to detain the remnants of Terra Lliure, a small-scale Catalonian terrorist organization. The arrests sparked outrage and eventually condemnation by the European Court of Human Rights, as they were more of an intimidation tactic. Initially, it would be proposed that the Catalonian anthem would be played when a Catalan athlete medaled, the Catalonians would march behind the other Spaniards, and that there would be a greater presence of Catalonian symbols. After much fighting over how the Catalan language and other symbols of Catalonia would be presented during the Games, an agreement was reached: Catalan became an official language of the Games, Catalan symbols would be present in all the acts, both anthems (Spain and Catalonia) would be played when the King entered, and the Catalan, Barcelona, and Spanish flag would be present in the center of the stadium.

Even after this, tension still remained between the different campaigns concerning Catalonian representation at the Games. An incident occurred, while the Olympic torch was in Barcelona, in which a group of right-wing members of the Bloque Catalan displayed a Spanish flag on the beach, they were surrounded by a crowd, pelted with sand and stones, and their flag

was burned. That group was taken into custody, blurring the lines between what should be deemed as a Francoist display and Spanish nationalism. Further, when the Spanish minister of education, Javier Solana, used Spanish to address a crowd, he was drowned out and mocked by the audiences, as speaking Spanish was seen as a sign of disrespect to Catalonians. Further, a member of the movement which desired independence for Catalonia, draped a “Freedom for Catalonia” banner around the stand where the Olympic torch was burning. This exposed the weakness of the central government and its authorities. During the opening ceremonies of the games, when the king did not stand at attention for Catalonia’s anthem, he was castigated by a nationalist leader. Overall, the idea of which nation took precedence is debated: Catalonia’s anthem was played first, while the Spanish flag was in the middle of Barcelona’s and Catalonia’s. The sardana also played a large role in the Games, signifying the discipline and precision of the people.

At the same time, the Games were also portrayed as Spanish. The presence of the royal family at the games and the king’s use of both Catalan and Spanish represent the unifying of the two nations. Further, a wearing of the same colors by the Spanish and Catalanian team and a playing of the Spanish national anthem when a Catalanian won a gold medal represents the *Españolization* of the games. Further, Spanish traditional dances and songs were played when representing Spain. While it could be said that troubles between Catalonia and Spain were the only problems troubling the games, the Olympics, as a global event, clearly caused the intervention of other nations. The Olympics as a global phenomenon, “facilitates communication, cultural interchange and a growth in mutual understanding, and thereby makes an important contribution to world peace” (Hargreaves 113). In fact, the Olympic flag, with five rings representing the five continents represents the unity that the event creates between the

nations. In the games, more nations were represented than ever before: South Africa was allowed to compete after it had been barred due to apartheid, a united German team competed, the twelve former republics of the Soviet Union created a single team, three new Baltic states competed, Yemen was represented as a unified country, and Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia appeared for the first time. The Games were also a call for unity and peace, as Yugoslavia was still in a war. Ultimately, it became a symbol of the desire for calm within Europe. Further, in closing speeches references were made to the need for peace in Europe, as war was still occurring around the world.

The Games were deemed one of the most successful Olympic Games that had ever taken place. None of the threats mentioned previously occurred during the event. On one hand, the Games allowed for the presentation of Catalonia on the world stage and promoted its economic development, but also created danger for Spain if something tragic were to occur, like an ETA terrorist attack. Also, it was a threat to Catalonia as the Games might have strengthened the relationship between Catalonia and Spain. Interestingly, the Guardia Civil and forces from the capital were forced to reduce their intense measures of security during the games, to present Spain as modernized and democratic. While the Games did not represent a turning point in Spanish democracy, it represented Spain's ability to withstand a threat of its democratic strength. At first, most in Spain desired to see Spain benefit rather than Catalonia, but as time went on, optimism increased, and most accepted that the community would benefit the most from the Games. Pujol, the president of Catalonia during the Games, had been jailed during the Franco regime for singing a patriotic poem of Catalonia during a concert. Pujol, as a key player in the games desired to Catalanize the Games while also exerting control over the radical groups in the area. Samaranch, the president of the International Olympic Committee, was from Barcelona and

a previous Minister of Sport under the Franco regime. Therefore, his status as a president of the committee and his push for Barcelona to host the games was motivated by a desire to erase the memory of his Francoist past and enhance his standing in Spain and in Catalonia, very similar to a *Pacto del Olvido* of his own reputation in the area. Pujol, as an important figure during the Games was criticized as being either too moderate, wanting to remain part of Spain or borderline separatist. This spawned the view of him as disingenuous and using his ideals for political gain.

The Games allowed Spain to enhance international prestige, demonstrate efficiency, modernity, and maturity as a democracy, and grow economically. Catalonia benefited by having a reinforcement of Catalan identity, an enhanced reputation abroad, an improved status in relation to Spain, and from economic growth, as well. Misinterpretations of the contributions of the governments persisted after the games as well. Those from regions outside of Catalonia viewed the central government as providing more financial contributions to the Games, while Catalonia viewed Barcelona's government and Catalonia's as providing aid. This disconnect in understanding between these two groups shows the increasing divide between Catalonia and the rest of Spain and the ways in which the areas were extremely different. Overall, the Games had a positive effect on the ways Spain was viewed by the world, by improving relationships and understanding between regions that had been at odds with one another. The Olympic Games represented the threat of national division once again, as different groups had different desires, but ultimately showed that the newfound democracy could be positive and function together in ways that they had not been able to previously. The 1992 Olympic Games, like any major event, had some displays of dissent, but represented a unity between the central Spanish government and the Catalan government. The success of these games represented Spain's commitment to integration in a new democratic world.



## **VOX's Success & Politics**

Spain, in recent years, has been viewed to be immune to the surge of right-wing groups facing Europe. After the transition to democracy, no extreme right-wing group existed until the creation of VOX. In the Andalusian elections of 2018, VOX won 11% of the total vote in the region. In the April 2019 elections, VOX won 10.26% of the vote of the entire nation, and 15.1% of the nation's vote in November of the same year.

The rise of VOX can be understood from different perspectives. First, the Partido Popular, a right-wing party, but not extreme right-wing, allowed for the development of neo-Franco sectors within the party. VOX can almost be understood as reaction to the Alianza Popular founded by Manuel Fraga, which attempted to unite the entire right-wing spectrum. This party, which later turned into the current Partido Popular is different from VOX, which desired a split from other right-wing parties. VOX, as a rebellious party, might also be understood as the distrust of ideological homogeneity. In fact, Santiago Abascal, was a member of the Partido Popular for years.

Second, the economic crisis of 2008, which created the 15-M movement and a general distrust of the government allowed for a change in the political landscape and a door for more extreme groups, like VOX, to come through. VOX, as a populist movement, rejects corruptness, which it finds in the Partido Popular. They win their votes through frustration with governmental establishments. The Franco regime left Spain with open wounds, and his Catholic beliefs allowed for the nation to be shaped, even years after his death. Within the government, it was difficult to break the influences of Francoism. In particular, the regime created a sort of political apathy and led people to almost desire authoritarianism to prevent discord and strife, like what occurred during the Civil War. The regime has also created a fear of political participation

among its citizens. Nationalism, such as sport victories for Spain has allowed pride, but certain regional desires, like those of Catalonia and the Basque Country, have further spurred the fear of conflict and separation. Further, when José María Aznar ruled as prime minister from 1996 to 2004 and was faced with the situation of ETA, he treated his conservative Partido Popular as the right side of the nation, while portraying the terrorist group as the opposite of constitutional democracy. His idea of patriotism excluded others opposed to his government and did not contain some of the ideals of tolerance that were so important in forming a fair state. After a terrorist attack by Al Qaeda in 2004, Aznar initially tried to place the blame on ETA, causing his defeat by PSOE in a subsequent election and the taking of power by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. After this, the Partido Popular and Aznar began to question the legitimacy of the elections and any act of power by Zapatero, including the legalization of same-sex marriage and the historical memory act, which allowed rights for victims of both sides of the regime, the elimination of public recognitions of Franco at the Valle de los Caídos, and the removal of Francoist symbols from streets and buildings. Conservative media also vilified Zapatero, criticizing his treatment of ETA, Catalonia, and victims of terrorism.

The Catalonia situation, as discussed previously, fostered the creation of VOX, as it represented the division of Spaniards once again. During the referendum during October 2017, many Spanish people openly protested against Catalonia, shouting “A por ellos” (go for them), to the Guardia Civil. Different from other European groups of the extreme-right, VOX was created out of members of the already existing conservative party (Partido Popular). VOX was able to gain momentum in a relatively short amount of time because many members already had connections through the Partido Popular. They were formed in 2013 in protest of the conservative president’s (Mariano Rajoy) doubtful reaction to Catalonia. They also demanded a

firm answer from him about the memory of the victims of ETA. Initially, they desired to enter the European elections of 2014. VOX split in order to prevent a further split of right-wing votes in the elections, and Santiago Abascal, the son of a Basque merchant threatened by ETA in the 90s, became the leader. Another important member of VOX was José Antonio Ortega Lara, a former prisoner officer who was kidnapped for 532 days in 1996 by ETA (the longest kidnapping by the group).

VOX maintains strong connections with military and police bodies, and hints at its connection to the Franco regime, which can be seen in its 2018 manifesto against the proposal of the exhumation of Franco's body. As mentioned previously, VOX has relations with international powers, which can be seen in its funding by the National Council of Resistance of Iran. VOX has also obtained funding from CitizenGO, an organization in Madrid that operated like a SuperPAC (which is prohibited in Spain). This organization has allowed for the organization to obtain money from conservative groups in the US and Russia. VOX may also have connections with Stephen Bannon, a former White House Chief Strategist.

VOX's main goals must also be defined. With just a simple glance at VOX's website, they list their "100 medidas," which are aimed at safeguarding the nation. Here, VOX views themselves as the protector of Spain who will take it back to its glory days. VOX desires a suspension of Catalan autonomy until the "coup" is defeated and those leaders who took part in the referendum are tried. VOX also desires the criminalization of any organization who advocates for the destruction of the nation's unity and sovereignty. VOX has also advocated for the repeal of the Historical Memory Law and a comprehensive education of the history of Spain. VOX clearly exaggerates the threat of Catalonia, which can be seen as a link to the Franco regime. The debate over the anti-Spain versus the true Spain was one of the key ideological

battles that began the Civil War. On immigration and influence of other nations, VOX has proposed the closure of fundamentalist mosques, the integration of migrations, and the construction of a border wall in Ceuta and Melilla to prevent the influx of immigrants from Morocco and Northern Africa. VOX has not proposed much to protect working class voters, like other conservative parties in Europe, but has proposed tax cuts, land deregulation, and partial privatization of the public pension system. A severe reduction of corporate taxes would benefit the richer in Spain. Further, VOX has proposed the idea of a natural family, who would receive benefits, such as social aid, tax cuts, and a Euro stipend. While not attacking LGBT rights directly, the idea of a natural family clearly attacks those of the community without children. VOX, in another anti-liberal idea, has proposed eliminating subsidies for radical feminist organizations. Sex reassignment surgeries, as defined by VOX, are outside the sphere of public healthcare. VOX has proposed the suspension of funding to parties, foundations and unions. Further, in dealing with ETA, they have proposed to pursue any pending case in court against the group as well as opening proceedings against those who have negotiated with the organization, even though the organization has been inactive since 2011. In the final section of VOX's policies, they propose a new treaty in Europe that focuses on borders, national sovereignty, and European values, while also preserving national sovereignty in international relations. VOX seems normal enough its some of its proposals, hoping for a universal tax rate and the integration of those with Down syndrome into society.

VOX has used nationalistic rhetoric, such as those values focusing on Catholicism and unity, similar to the ones that Franco used to create an otherness with the groups that think differently than them. The emphasis on the family as the basic cell of Spanish society also harkens back to Francoist ideals. The tweet referenced earlier, with VOX fighting those who

wish to destroy it, represents once again VOX's belief that there are people who wish to defend Spain and those who wish to destroy it. VOX, in their view, represents the sole defender of Spain against those who are too radical. VOX has also appealed to the more rural areas of Spain, as they have been abandoned in the electoral system in favor of the larger urban areas. VOX may also represent insecure masculinity, as the group has attacked feminist groups and reproductive rights, such as abortion. It is surprising that in a country that has advanced since the dictatorship, feminism is believed to be so radical and anti-Spanish.

While not referring to themselves as fascist or totalitarian, the group seems to want to stifle the liberties that Spain has been able to achieve in its most recent years. It is unfortunate, after the country has liberalized and has worked to increase the freedoms and rights of those who have been repressed in the past, a group like VOX can not only reappear, but gain power in the nation. In a world that has been divided for years and continues to be divided, this concept of otherness is one that will remain destructive and polarizing.

In understanding VOX's rise to power, it is also crucial to understand who votes for the party. Most people that voted for VOX in the Andalusia elections had concerns with immigration, rejection of PSOE, and national unity. The fear of immigrants is best understood as a lack of exposure to these people. Therefore, those who vote for VOX are members of wealthy neighborhoods or areas with increased military presence. VOX has created controversy in those who are more liberal than the group. The leader of the socialist government, Pedro Sánchez, was given support around the elections of December 2018, and an anti-fascist alert was put into place. While not literally an alert, the socialist government was wary of VOX. Although the party may be alarming, it is not fair to dub them, or the great number of people that voted for them in Andalusia, fascists. The concept of identity politics has played into VOX's success as

well. In the 2016 USA elections, it was believed that Trump would only appeal to the white working class, but in his victory, it was discovered that Trump was able to appeal to whites across populations, whether they be suburban, university, or of the working class. Identity politics have also failed, because a reduction of voters to only their identities is irresponsible, socially and politically (Rubio-Pueyo).

Spain, as a somewhat newly democratic nation, or one that has encountered swift changes in its governmental style has to be able to equilibrate itself, while dealing with a political climate in other countries that is ever-changing. In the United States, politics can be overwhelming, with the two major political parties clashing, but in Spain, the situation is different, as the nation must put its fascist and Francoist past behind itself, while also being able to remember the hardship that it caused. While Spain has passed laws in order to put itself past the dictatorship that plagued its society, it still remains exceedingly difficult to reconcile what it has done versus what it wants to be moving forward. The ways in which Franco took power, in a violent coup d'état, are despicable and will forever leave a blemish on the country. Germany, a nation that has had to face a problematic past, has adopted the approach to teach its citizens about the atrocities that were committed, in order to prevent them from occurring again.

One striking scene from *The Silence of Others*, occurs when an interviewer asks Spaniards (mostly of the younger generation) what they know about the Franco regime. As mentioned before and in line with previous research, most seemed indifferent. Even the older generations, ones that lived through the dictatorship, were mostly in support of the *Pacto del Olvido*, in order to move on from their frightening past and move towards a brighter Spain. While, in theory, this may seem like a viable approach to moving past the regime, when faced with parties like VOX, it can be difficult to write off any memory of what occurred. If Spain was

to completely forget what occurred leading up to the Civil War, during, and many years after, this conversation about VOX would not be as pressing or as poignant. While right-wing ideals have been condemned by those with more liberal ideals in the United States, the US does not have as much of a fear of these occurrences, as they never faced a fascist regime or the deaths of thousands of its people. The American Civil War, while still more bloody than Spain's, was fought almost 70 years before Spain's, and occurred as a result of a fundamental ideological difference, rather than a violent control of the government. Further, the United States did not deal with fascism and a suppressive dictatorship after its conflict. While Spain should not label VOX as neo-fascism, it is important to be wary of the lengths people have gone and will go in order to obtain the power that they think will be beneficial. While observing Franco's ideas, ones of protecting Spain, he did the opposite. VOX, in the same way, while wanting to protect Spain, may also vilify women, LGBT people, and immigrants, which truly make a nation great.

VOX had an interesting rise to power, as it was deemed one of the countries to be an exception to the resurgence of right-wing groups, along with Portugal. It may have been able to maintain an ideology away from extreme right-wing ideals because its conservative groups had been fractured after the dictatorship, it being one of the last in Europe, and therefore, needing more time to recover from the past. Interestingly, the way in which Spain dealt with its past after the war is different than the methods in France in Germany. The latter two countries rejected fascists and refused to negotiate with them after their time in power, but Spain integrated them and formed regional governments with them, legitimizing them in the political playing field. To understand the rise of VOX, it is crucial to compare the rise of the party with the rise of a right-wing group in Germany, *Alternativ fur Deutschland*. After the World Wars in Europe, the continent hoped to create a place free from the violence that had plagued it. With Trump's

election in 2016 and his ability to win over a large portion of the population, other right-wing groups found that they might be able to follow the same trajectory. Most populist groups, like VOX and AfD, seem to identify an enemy: for Hungary, it is the Roma community, for Trump it is undocumented immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries. AfD's enemy is the Christian Democratic Union of Germany, for their acceptance of all groups into the nation. Like Donald Trump in 2016, AfD and VOX have both rejected the idea of political correctness and appealed to the concept of the silent majority, a group of people that will not make their ideas known, but believe in these increasingly conservative ideas. AfD was also created in 2013 and declared its creation in a convention in Berlin. In September of that year, AfD was just shy of the votes needed to enter the parliament. In 2016, elections, with the migrant crisis growing, AfD was able to secure double digit percentages in the three states in which the elections took place. The party, at this time, opposed Islam and called for the ban of its symbols in the country, as they said that Islam is not a part of Germany. In 2017, AfD was able to capture 12.6% of the vote. After World War II, Germany had not experienced intense nationalism, due to its bad history with national socialism. One of the leaders of the party used words such as the Fatherland and Volk (people/crowd), words that have had Nazi connotations. Further, Höcke, the politician in question, was quoted saying that "Germans are the only people in the world who plant a monument of shame in the heart of the capital" (in reference to the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin). The party opposes the intense unity that Europe faces, such as forcing all European nations to use the Euro and bailing out smaller European nations, like Greece. AfD is antifeminist and slightly against same-sex marriage. The party is skeptical of climate change and also believes in traditional roles for women.



AfD and VOX are similar in that they both needed a catalyst in order to gain support. For AfD, it took the form of Islam, and for VOX it took the form of Catalonia. VOX relied on the Catalonia situation and its intense reaction, which was suing the entire Catalonian parliament, in order to gain support and get its name out in the country. The Andalusian elections also represent a turning point for the party as they were able to gain seats in the assembly after Andalusia had been under a left-wing government. VOX has similar ideals to AfD, in that it desires to keep its sovereignty within the European Union. VOX is also antifeminist and desires a repeal of the Gender Violence Law, and a replacement with a general family violence law to protect any person who suffers from abuse, not just abuse based on sex. Spain, as a nation facing an identity crisis, has the problem of multiple flags. Catalonia and the Basque Country both have their own flags, with Catalonia also having a flag for independence. With these flags, many are able to display them outside their houses. Therefore, some have used these flags to declare that those who desire to fly the Spanish flag in these regions are seen as fascists, even though they are in support of their country. This has appealed to conservative voters who feel disenchanted with liberal politics and the fact that they cannot have the desire to remain united. AfD can be understood as a rejection of mainstream politics and a vote for them can be seen as a protest of politics and the system that has not pleased them. Germany is less catastrophic and divided than AfD has made them out to be.

Spain has been a four-party system after its transition to democracy (Podemos, PSOE, Ciudadanos, and Partido Popular). VOX has introduced the possibility of a five-party system. The ability of VOX to protest against Catalonia also threatens the power that the Autonomous Communities have (Di Giuro). Being in the early stages of the development of these political parties, it is uncertain what their destiny will be, and it is difficult to imagine how the country

will deal with VOX if its power grows and it tries to violently take power, like the Franco regime. In a democratic country, it is the hope that this would not occur, but the nation must be prepared to deal with the implications of a violent taking of power and rejection of different identities within the nation. It certainly is not a cause for alarm right now, as fascism requires a dictatorship who acts as the head of government. Spain has resisted a coup in 1981 for the sake of democracy, and it is the hope that democracy will outlast any government that strips the rights of its individuals. While VOX, as an ideology should not be feared, it is also necessary to examine the circumstances that have allowed it to gain traction.

## **Conclusion**

This paper came about after viewing a YouTube video of a protestor singing “Cara al sol,” the Franco-era hymn at a protest against Catalonia. Under the video, there were comments of “arriba España” and others labeling those in Catalonia who wanted independence as communists. There must have been something in Spain that allowed people to feel comfortable using this rhetoric. In learning about the history of Spain’s political landscape, the goal was to uncover the legacy of Franco and VOX was the perfect culmination of right-wing ideology reminiscent of Franco to do so.

Overall, VOX is another representation of a disenchantment with a political situation in a country that has already faced enough turmoil. VOX came about and will continue to grow because of separatists, namely in Catalonia, that have threatened to divide the nation once again and weaken it. Its populist appeal is great, as it rejects those who desire a different structure of the nation, among them immigrants, left-wing thinkers, and even the Partido Popular, a fellow right-wing party. What makes VOX so different here is that it fights against the establishment of

government. VOX is not a unique phenomenon and its rhetoric exists in other countries. In Italy, Lega, a populist party, has vowed to deport 500,000 immigrants and does not support LGBT people (Stille). Much like Donald Trump in the United States, VOX is a group that speaks its mind and desires to “drain the swamp,” meaning to get rid of those in the government who have their own interests in mind. What all of these parties have in common is the desire to put their respective citizens first, and that they view other groups as enemies that will put native-born citizens on the backburner.

Looking once again to the Franco regime and the Falange, VOX echoes some of the nationalist sentiments and the pride of being Spanish: “La Falange ya no se debe a sí misma. Se debe a España” (Giménez Caballero 8). The idea of a party and its citizens belonging to the state and working for its advancement are very similar to VOX, who claims to desire the best for the country. Further, VOX sees themselves as unstoppable and desires to vanquish its enemies along the way, just like the Falange: “Nuestro movimiento camina más que arriba. Ya el pueblo, el combatiente, ha encontrado el nuevo grito integrador: ¡somos requetefalangistas” (Giménez Caballero 8). VOX sounds similar, with cries of “¡Fuerza España! ¡Lo superaremos!” and rejects those who are elite in favor of a united nation. At its base, the party believes that the nation must be united to defeat these who threaten the nation: LGBT groups, Catalonia, immigrants, and the like. Without a doubt, the rejection of diverse groups of people is somewhat problematic and worrisome, but it is also not sufficient to completely ban or even have hatred towards these groups of people.

VOX, as stated previously, is the reaction to those left-leaning ideologies that it believes are seeking to destroy society. There are two ways to understand VOX as it relates to the current political climate in Spain. One way to understand VOX is as the last stage of an “efecto marea”

or a tide. Spain, in recent years, has struggled with a transition that has left its people dissatisfied with the legacy of Franco (on both sides), a region of the nation that desires its independence, and a terrorist group. This strong wave of right-wing ideology is the last part of huge political occurrences in the nation. VOX, like the tide, hits strongly, before it pulls back. The second way that VOX can be understood is a holistic reaction to different groups within the country. VOX has taken an “us versus them” mentality, with the “us” being true Spaniards, and the “them” being those who want to destroy it. VOX reacts against progressive ideologies (PSOE and Podemos), minority groups (LGBT people and women), regionalism (Basque and Catalanian), and immigrants (Muslim and others). VOX’s “100 medidas” exemplify this reaction, with their call for the repeal of homosexual marriage, the domestic violence law, their desire to crush regionalist insurrections against the state, and their goal to deport immigrants. VOX also reacts to an increasingly secular society and, as discussed, wants to relive Spain’s glory days. In many ways, this mirrors the rhetoric of the Franco regime. The call for the purification of Spain, free from outside influence, seems similar to the concept of “Hispanidad” proposed by the Falange. The rejection of ideals that go against religion mirrors Franco’s obsession with a nation that had its basis in Catholicism. The hatred towards Muslims and VOX’s goal to reconquer Spain sounds like the dictatorship’s reclaiming of lost glory.

The present thesis has analyzed different left-leaning reactions to dictatorship and repression, ones that have even been violent. Humans are always going to search out ways to stand up for what they think is right, and VOX is no exception. Without taking a political side, it is important to understand that VOX creates its opinions and its beliefs in the same way as Catalonia or even ETA. It is important to examine the scope of these issues as a whole, taking into account why people have reactions to government in the ways they do. VOX, simply understood

as a group that wants to better the country and to resist the influence of groups that it perceives as wanting to affect its way of life is not inherently evil. It is definitely controversial to be against social groups and not want the same rights for all people, but its purposes go beyond this. At its best, VOX simply wants a Spain free from destruction or outside influence. At its worse, VOX wants to harken back to the fascist dictatorship. The most important factor in the creation of VOX was the Catalonia crisis, because it embodied everything VOX feared, a true splitting of the nation. Franco's legacy has left a deep fear of disunity and Catalonia has allowed for VOX to show its supporters and the rest of Spain that threats to unity are real and has given them the power to label any opposer as a threat to unity.

Whether or not VOX is justified, people understand what has happened in their nation, and any kind of extreme violence to take power should be condemned, independent of political leaning. In viewing the intense repression put on left-wing groups during the dictatorship, and the ability for these groups to grow and thrive even while the dictatorship continued, it is clear that the human spirit and its ideals of what it believes to be right will flourish and take precedence, even when lives are in danger. VOX, as a representative of the human spirit, is a group that has been formed from what people on the right believe to be correct. Going past the arbitrary labels of fascism and dictatorship that have plagued the groups newfound rise, it is necessary to examine them from the perspective of a group that has found themselves left out of politics in recent years, with the country leaning more left. To reject immigrants and LGBT+ people is extremely problematic, but it is critical to examine the group as wanting to keep the nation what it once was, even though it has a problematic past. Repression and its rejection will always battle, and VOX is no exception to the ways in which people will respond when they find their way of life threatened.

VOX is a sort of “coming out of the closet,” a cathartic way for those who support right-wing ideologies to be able to express their ideals, as they have never had a clear outlet to do so. Populism and extremist ideals are usually held by many people, and VOX represents the stepping stone for these beliefs to come to light. VOX, while a political party that uses fear to invoke its supporters, finds its base in a group of people fearful of the threat of division and the violation of what they believe to be fair, fitting, and moral in the nation.

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