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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This essay derived from a series of collaborative research projects launched with my colleagues Josep Maria Oller (University of Barcelona, UB) and Albert Satorra (Pompeu Fabra University, UPF Barcelona), in early 2018. In 2019 we published *Pathways and legacies of the secessionist push in Catalonia: linguistic frontiers, economic segments and media roles within a divided society*, Policy Network Paper. October 2019. That online essay was the frontispiece for a series of research papers by those three authors that characterized the evolution of Catalonian secession bid from 2006-2020. The bulk of this research appears, summarized, at Chapter 8 of this paper.

As we were analysing details of the statistical series that permitted an exhaustive characterisation of the main vectors behind the secession bid in Catalonia, I enjoyed the enormous privilege to be guided by two distinguished statisticians who maintain a deep knowledge of their field and a devotion for precision and restraint. Our discussions at the UPF campus or over coffee in downtown Barcelona were often a refuge of fruitful symbiosis and lively friendship. Two of the chapters of this paper (1: Situation maps; 8: Longitudinal profiles of Catalonian citizenry) are the result of common and intensive work over two years and they ought to be reported as written by three Authors. The rest of this essay also owns a big debt to them as it was enriched by their illuminating comments.

Barry Colfer from Policy Network guided us first on the inaugural paper of the series of research studies that form the crucial backbone of this essay, and afterwards stimulated and primed us to write a short essay on the topic of “Fragmented Catalonia” (his title for the paper, by the way). I took the job of finishing it and he has accompanied me through all stages of writing with dedication and great care. Dhara Snowden and Rebecca Anastasi at Rowman and Littlefield also deserve praise for a fine and meticulous job of producing the final book version of this research to be published in mid-2021.

London-based Spanish friends gave support to this endeavour and skilfully moved all kind of resources that allowed us to secure the necessary funds for this publication.

Damián Gil M.D., provided the first script that permitted me access to build the database of the full series of CEO Barometers. OEC Group members (Barcelona) provided lively discussions with suggestions that improved and helped to focus and refine the research that informs this essay.

It is compulsory to refer to the excellent disposition of Policy Network, Palgrave Communications, Genealogy, The Economic Journal, Fundación Europea Sociedad y Educación, and the European Journal of Language Policy, to permit the adaptation of figures and tables that appeared, in previous versions, in these different sources. EDLibros-Barcelona was eager to allow me to adapt several texts for this essay that had appeared, in Spanish language, at Tobeña A (2020) “Catañoles”, EDLibros, Barcelona. It is also necessary to acknowledge the debt I owe to El País, El Español and Catarata Ed, for reproducing several fragments of texts which are duly referenced here. I am also grateful to the graph files of La Vanguardia.

CEO-Catalunya and CIS-Spain, provide a rich and open source of sociological data with splendid and commendable regularity. GESOP-Barcelona and Metroscopia-Madrid also deserve acknowledgement for adapting some of their published data.

Finally, my work on this essay was partially supported by AFOSR-MINERVA FA9550-18-0496 Grant and Bial Foundation Grant 163/14.
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Preface

The Catalonian secessionist crisis was the most noticeable event that Spain offered to Western politics in the opening decades of this century. Within this time, characterised as it is by huge technological acceleration, myriad online and trade interactions across multiple levels, high levels of political polarisation, and widespread feelings of collective unease and discontent, the Catalonian secessionist movement has become one of the prevalent topics of public policy and political debate in the European Union (EU).

The secessionist movement in Catalonia coincided with the double fragmentary shock that affected another European polity, given the tortuous and protracted Brexit process and with the related increasing drive towards Scottish independence being experienced in the United Kingdom (UK). Each of these movements – Catalan secession, Scottish independence, and the UK's withdrawal from the EU – continue to play out and continue to arouse curiosity. It does this given the initial outbreak, gradual growth, remarkable staying-power, and the subsequent entrenchment of positions in each case that resulted from these different secessionist movements, each of them experiments uniquely European in nature.

A number of characteristic and overlapping ingredients have defined the Catalonian secessionist bid, including:

1. The movement crystallized through enormous and frequent street demonstrations which displayed an enormous mobilising capacity and a highly effective and sustained form of activism;

2. The apparently grassroots movement had a firm direction exercised by the regional government and the autonomous parliament. Both behaved in blatant violation of constitutional and home rule norms through iterated and defiant disobedient acts

3. Media outlets under the direct (or indirect) control of the region's autonomous administration have expressed an uninhibited and systematic bias in favour of secession;

4. The movement asserted its influence partly through the presence, often overwhelmingly so, of secessionist symbols and emblems in many aspects of public life, including with flags, banners and billboards in many public places.

5. The secessionist bid was pursued in the absence of any clear social majority in favour of independence in the region;
6. There was a highly effective silencing of non-secessionist public opinion throughout much of the enduring secessionist campaign and subsequent litigation;

7. A curious paralysis was induced, which later evolved into irritation, confusion and anguish, at the level of the Spanish central administration and, with it, among many within the wider Spanish population who followed the course of the conflict with a mix of perplexity, fatigue and boredom;

8. Deep divisions appeared and became entrenched and often highly confrontational between the two main segments of the Catalan population – that is, between secessionists and unionists; and

9. All this happened in one of the richest and most advanced regions of Southern Europe within a tolerant and fully open democratic context.

Those distinctive features are also behind the frequent scrutiny that the secessionist crisis has received from some of the most followed and prestigious tribunes of international journalism. And from this, too, comes the prominence of Catalan political leaders and celebrities in visible positions throughout Spanish and European societies. Few can ignore this lively corner of the western Mediterranean, much loved as a destination for tourists and lovers of culture, whose capital Barcelona is consistently ranked among Europe’s favourite cities, and that plays host to one of the most well-known and internationally followed soccer teams in the world, Barça FC.

In much international media coverage, the Catalanon matter is often reduced to the following: Catalan citizens, typically so dynamic and engaging, with such a wonderful city, Barcelona, as their capital, and who have created that fantastic toy for global entertainment, Barça FC, are not at ease with life within Spain and would like to rule their society and to organise their lives themselves. Meanwhile, the central authority in Spain resists any demand for attaining sovereignty, which brings to the fore the country’s latent authoritarianism by not even allowing the region to settle the issue, in a civilized way, by authorising a referendum – contrary, it should be said, to what has happened in Scotland, given the 2014 independence referendum which confirmed Scotland’s place within the UK, at least for now. Spain has even gone so far as to imprison several Catalan leaders who organised unauthorised and illegal consultations to gauge the opinion of the citizenry about the prospect of seceding from Spain. This antagonism and conflict has poisoned the relations between regional and central authorities and the conviviality among many Catalanon citizens.

This paper will provide a report into the existence of other Catalanon citizens who do not usually appear in tellings of this often truncated and over-simplified story. There is great diversity within this group, which I deign to call CatSpanish for simplicity, and because this denomination fits in many cases with their...
identifiable characteristics, as we will see later. In short, the CatSpanish citizenry recognise and declare a double national identity – both Catalonian and Spanish, to varying degrees for each person – in terms of feelings of belonging. However, I do not seek to provide a complete definition for this cohort, as to do so would be impossible within these pages, but I will provide a broad-brush account of this diverse majoritarian group throughout the paper.

This is because, firstly, I am aware that such definitions of habits, attitudes and behaviours are always simplifications, and secondly, as above, because any full characterisation would require an in depth and extremely fine-grained analysis that is beyond the scope of this analysis.

The tense and embittered dispute between Catalonian citizens who are in favour of segregation from Spain and those who prefer to maintain the ties that unite them to the rest of Spain, has, to a large extent, poisoned the good governance and the enjoyment of the undeniable amenities of the region. It should be noted that a portion of CatSpanish citizens would also like to be rid of the burdens of Spanish rule, but that is not a crucial defining feature of this cohort, as there are quite a few in the rest of Spain who would also appreciate being liberated from Spanish rule. Therefore, it is not necessary to automatically equate CatSpanish citizenry with those who favour unionism with Spain: the matter is much more intricate and as I progress by sketching and analysing a wide range of relevant data, hopefully I will shed some light on this complex group.

The core political attribute that defines individuals as CatSpanish is that they identify, often intimately, with the air, the environment and the multitude of ingredients and variants that makes up the great bounty of Spanish traditions. In other words, they relate to the rich tapestry of the peoples who have made the Iberian Peninsula their home throughout the centuries. In Catalonia there are many such people – in fact, they are probably the majority.

The first two chapters present a brief portrait of the place of Catalonia within Spain and the main political events and recent electoral results that underpin the entrenched and polarised situation that has taken room in the region in the wake of the secession push. Chapters 3-4 present several profiles of political leaders and prominent celebrities from both the secessionist and unionist fields. Chapter 5 presents an attempt to characterise the permanent competition between the main economic and cultural poles within contemporary Spain – Barcelona vs Madrid – and the crucial impact this has on Spanish politics. Chapter 6 summarises the key identity traits and essential characteristics that define the majoritarian segment of the Catalanian citizenry, namely, those that treasure dual national identities, feeling both Catalan and Spanish. Chapter 7 describes the current iteration of the tradition of fierce factionalism within Spanish politics. Chapter 8 provides the core of the essay and presents in detail the longitudinal findings that allow for the characterisation of the main vectors which lead to the current political and social fracturing of Catalanian society.
through a distinctive ethnolinguistic cleavage. The idiomatic and economic segmentations through which the division has occurred are described using data from across two decades. The fissure came, in essence, as a result of concerted action involving a proudly disloyal regional government and a network of local elites and activist organisations, that worked to promote a secessionist agenda that is against the wishes of more than half of the Catalan population. The crucial role played by regional media outlets is also analysed here. Chapter 9 contains a description of the most valuable data that has been accrued on the Catalanian educational system, which has also proven to be a powerful tool to promote division within society. Chapters 10 and 11 offer additional perspectives to try to help readers to better understand the seriousness of the division within Catalonia and the reverberations and polarising effects this has induced in Spain’s politics. In the epilogue and postscript, I try, finally, to summarise the current political stalemate given the paralyzing shock of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This essay was initially conceived as an expansion of a paper by Josep M Oller JM, Albert Satorra and Adolf Tobeña entitled ‘Pathways and legacies of the secessionist push in Catalonia: linguistic frontiers, economic segments and media roles within a divided society’ that was published by Policy Network in October 2019 and is available here.11

The final form of the paper derives from a series of research studies that describe the evolution of the main vectors through which the deep fissure in Catalanian society was created, as a result of a top-down planned and openly announced attempt at secession that was commanded by a partisan autonomous administration that had convinced less than half of Catalonia to support them. These findings come from a joint and very fruitful research endeavour that I shared with my colleagues Josep M. Oller (University of Barcelona) and Albert Satorra (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona). They are described, in detail, at several papers in specialised journals. The paper covers a wider range of areas and enters into the profiling of prominent social figures and chronicles more deeply some of the circumstances and events that may help to define this entrenched political crisis.
Situation maps

Antecedents

Catalonia is one of the seventeen autonomous regions that comprise contemporary Spain (Figure 1). The region is politically designated as a nationality by its Statute of Autonomy, and the regional government and autonomous parliament make the rules relating to most issues relating to citizen's lives and occupations as a result of the wide-ranging executive, legislative and fiscal responsibilities and capabilities that it enjoys. Catalonia capital city, Barcelona, is the second largest in Spain, after Madrid, and is the centre of one the largest metropolitan areas in the Mediterranean basin.

Spanish Catalonia comprises most of the territory of a medieval Principality that was part of the Aragon Kingdom that joined the Castilian Kingdom to form modern Spain in the fifteenth century. A minor part of Catalonia, on the Northern side of the Pyrenees mountains remained under French rule and is currently a small French “department” with Perpignan as its capital.

Figure 1: Spain's Regions

The current population of Catalonia is around 7,500,000 citizens: 42-45 per cent can be described as being of ‘native ascendancy’ or have long ago assimilated, and the remaining 55-58 per cent settled in the region during the twentieth
century, arriving within several migratory waves from the rest of Spain and more recently from many other origins.

The official languages in Catalonia are Catalan, Spanish and Aranese (a variant of the Occitan language). According to the most recent survey of common idiomatic uses in the region,iii the habitual languages of the citizenry is Spanish (56 per cent); Catalan (36 per cent); both Spanish and Catalan languages (6 per cent); and other languages (5 per cent), including: Arab, Italian, Urdu, Romanian, English, Chinese, French and the Amazigh (Berber) languages.

A brief on Catalonian secession push

The enduring secessionist challenge in Catalonia has dominated Spain’s political landscape in recent years, creating a stalemate that shows no signs of disappearing. Over the last decade, secessionist forces won three regional elections and were able to sustain governments by tiny majorities in the region’s autonomous parliament. Two illegal consultations regarding self-determination were called during this period, and around 2 million (38 per cent of Catalonia’s eligible voters) supported secession from Spain. Following the second consultation on 1 October 2017, an “Independence Declaration” was officially proclaimed by the autonomous parliament on 27 October 2017, an action which was instantly followed by the suspension of home rule for the region, as sanctioned by the Spanish Parliament, that endured until mid-2018.

The secessionist parties reasserted their lead at the last regional elections on 27 December 2017. These elections were called by the Spanish government as a way to try to solve the constitutional logjam that the independence declaration had created and to put an end to the suspension of home rule that had been put in place two months previously. The results, however, merely confirmed the stagnation although the formation of a new regional government had to wait until mid-2018, after several unsuccessful attempts by the leaders of the independence movement to reinstate a government while several of them were in prison or had fled into exile. These strenuous efforts to form a government were all blocked by legal provisions dictated by the Spanish High Court.

A left-wing government was formed in Spain in June 2018 led by the centre-left Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE)iv which initially had the support of the Catalanian and Basque nationalist parties. This new scenario seemed to open up opportunities to explore plausible solutions for the chronically entrenched situation. However, exploratory talks between the Spanish government and the new secessionist Catalan government did not lead to substantial progress. At Spain’s general election on the 28 April 2019, left-wing parties strengthened their lead in the parliament in Madrid without reaching a stable majority and the formation of a new social democratic/left populist government had to wait until January 2020, after another general election was held on 10 November 2019. The final sentencing of the rebellious secessionist leaders by the Supreme

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iii. EULP2018-Enquesta Usos lingüístics de la població, Institut Estadístic Catalunya. https://www.idescat.cat/pub/?id=eulp
iv. PSOE is the main social democratic party in Spain
Court v. was handed down on 10 October 2019, which condemned several of the secessionist leaders to several years in prison for sedition, and also for embezzlement.

The main social consequence of the secessionist campaign has been the build-up of a deep political divide between two large segments of Catalonian citizenry, between unionists and secessionists, which was absent before the surge in support for segregation from Spain. The lack of a majority behind the vigorous, perseverant but failed secessionist venture injected friction and tension into Catalan society that was hitherto largely unknown. Close neighbours, colleagues, acquaintances and even friends and families who had different feelings of identification with Catalonia and Spain (to varying degrees for each person), as part of their intimate identities, attachments and values, became sharply divided on the issue of secession and must now continue to live together amid this unsolved tension.

Distinctions around one’s “sense of belonging” (national identity feelings) can be used as a good indicator of the divide that exists between secessionists and unionists. Secessionists tend to declare an almost exclusive affective attachment to Catalonia, whereas unionists display various communal bonds, with a dominant sense of attachment to both Spain and Catalonia (i.e. Catspanish). This gap between these two predominant forms of national identification in Catalonia is rather recent and appeared largely as a consequence of the abrupt polarization on the issue of secession in recent years. The accentuation of affective features of identity around a specific political divide (i.e. accept/reject secession, in this case), reproduce similar paths towards increasing animosity and ruthless partisanship that has characterized recent political struggle in several Western societies. The harsh partisanship that now exists between many democrats and republicans in the US that grew through an increasingly narrow fusion of self and group identities is a prominent example of this as is the contemptuous struggle that divided the UK population on the issue of remaining or leaving the EU.

From abrupt polarisation to chronic entrenchment

By way of illustration, it is convenient to start by depicting the preferences of Catalonian citizens on the issue of secession throughout the period that is analysed in this essay, namely between 2006 – 2020. Figure 1 shows the evolution of public opinion regarding the question of secession based on representative samples of Catalan citizenry through successive opinion polls undertaken by the Centre d’Estudis d’Opinió (CEO) – the polling agency of the Catalonian regional government – during this period.
Figure 2: Preferences of Catalan citizens (in percentages) regarding the political status of the region*

*The political organisation of Spain is in many aspects federal and highly decentralised. Regions with home rule powers are referred to as “autonomous communities” rather than “states” for historical reasons. The perception of coincidence is illustrated by the green and yellow lines of the graph following an almost identical course throughout subsequent CEO surveys (see CEO Barometer of Political Opinion, available here.⁶ Data was gathered from personal interviews with representative samples of 1500-2500 citizens for each survey (the most recent iteration depicted in Figure 2 took place on 31 July 2020). ‘Autonomous community’ thus best describes the current status of Catalonia within Spain, which denotes a highly decentralised region with powers of home rule. The proportion of DK/NA (do not know or no answers) are omitted from the analysis.

This series of polls were initiated in 2006. Preferences on the status of the region showed a fairly stable pattern until 2010, at which point the secessionist segment started to gradually increase over two years, which was followed by an abrupt eruption from October 2012 peaking around the start of 2014. In numbers, in January 2010, those who wanted secession were below 20 per cent; in October 2011, this had grown to 30 per cent and since October 2012 this cohort stood above 45 per cent, which provided the trigger for the secessionist breakaway. December 2014 marked the start of a small decline in support for secession that stabilised at about 40 per cent of those surveyed, with minor oscillations. Figure 3 shows how, in raw percentages, those who supported remaining a part of Spain (in its various forms) and those supporting secession have been essentially tied since December 2014 which underscores the entrenched nature of the political divide. These results have been repeatedly confirmed, using different variations and methodologies, in surveys conducted.

by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), the survey agency of the Spanish government. vii

Figure 3: Percentages of citizens responding YES/NO to a direct question about secession from Spain in a hypothetical referendum on self-determination

Percentages of citizens responding YES/NO to a direct question about secession from Spain in a hypothetical referendum on self-determination (CEO surveys, Barometer of Political Opinion, available here. viii) The proportion of ‘DK/NA’ are omitted.

The main consequence of the long secessionist campaign has been the creation of a deep division between secessionists and unionists – the two biggest segments of Catalonian citizens – a division that did not exist before the emergence of the secessionist movement. 3, 4, 14, 20, 21, 31, 108

This fragmentation also appears in the region’s election results. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the distinctive geographical distribution of secessionism and unionism in the results of the Catalan regional elections in December 2017. Notably, secessionism dominates the vast and relatively less populated interior of the Catalan territory, while unionism prevails, although not so overwhelmingly, in the coastal conurbations.
Source: Official election data. Secessionist parties enjoy majority support in 76 per cent of municipalities, representing some 78 per cent of the total surface of the region, but only 20 per cent of the population, while the remaining 80 per cent of the population live in the remaining 24 per cent of municipalities where secessionist did not enjoy majority support. Thus, secessionism is highly concentrated in inland counties, whereas unionism predominates in the more populated coastal areas but also in some Pyrenean and peripheral counties as well.

Figure 4 can be complemented with details of total numbers (Table 1), derived from the electoral data from the 21 December 2017 regional elections.
Table 1: Absolute support for secessionist and non-secessionist parties in the different geographic areas in the 2017 regional elections as set out in Figure 4; M = 1 million votes.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Zone in Red</th>
<th>Secessionists</th>
<th>Non-Secessionists</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zone in White</td>
<td>1.069M</td>
<td>0.434M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.065M</td>
<td>3.263M</td>
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Figure 5: Percentage of unionist votes for non-secessionist parties at the 2017 regional elections, 21 December 2017*

* Source: Official election data. Unionism predominates in more populated coastal areas and in some Pyrenean and peripheral counties. The darker the green areas denote higher support to the unionist formations as indicated by the scale set out above.
In the two most recent regional contests, the difference in total votes for each sides was limited to a narrow margin of about 150,000 votes, with a unionist predominance on both occasions. These maps therefore delimit, albeit only roughly, the distinctive geographical distribution of secessionist and unionist majorities.

In terms of linguistic identification, places with a clear predominance of native Catalan speakers on the one hand tend to have majority support for secession, and places with a clear predominance of native Spanish speakers or mixed speakers – or mostly CatSpanish areas, as I dub them in this essay – tend to have a majority that prefer to remain a part of Spain. This stark territorial distribution of political preferences relating to secession has been analysed as an ingredient anchored in the ancestry and family origin of citizens.\textsuperscript{14, 63, 91} In other words, as a segmentation that reflects the preponderance of native family origin, especially in the vast interior of the region, as opposed to the communities that built up as a result of successive migrations throughout especially the 20th century in the more populated coastal areas. Thus, this political segmentation reflects a recognisable geographic, linguistic and socioeconomic stratification (for more on this, see Chapter 8).

This geographical compartmentalisation of the secessionist and unionist votes also occurred, in a similar way, at the latest state-wide elections (see Figure 6). The results of this election marked a remarkable degree of similarity with the results of the 2017 regional elections that ended the differential trends in voting and abstention rates which had distinguished these types of elections from one another for decades. The polarisation around secession has been so intense that the electorate has ended up responding in much the same way regardless of the nature and subject of successive elections.
Geographical distribution of electoral support obtained by secessionist formations across Catalonia at the Spanish general election on 10 November 2019.
Finally, it should be reiterated that the absence of a clear majority behind the secessionist push opened up frictions and tensions between these two large population segments within Catalan society that were hitherto largely unknown until recent years. As remarked previously neighbours, colleagues.
acquaintances and even friends and families who had different feelings of belonging to and identification with Catalonia and Spain (to varying degrees for every person), became deeply divided on the issue of secession and must now continue to live together amid this unsolved and entrenched tension.\textsuperscript{21,103}

For years during the mounting and burgeoning secessionist campaign, the most common way to avoid this daily tension was simply to ignore it. But any attempt to bury the question did not help and has not resolved the underlying frictions. Almost everyone now recognizes the depth of the divide and many dare to comment on it without apprehension or inhibition. In this spirit, I have decided to undertake this preliminary tour of the CatSpanish universe.
CatSpanish citizenry: from silence to prominence

"I’m not abandoning Machado, or leaving Cervantes, or renouncing Rosalía".

- Gabriel Rufián, in a speech to the Spanish Parliament during the session that approved the new central government in January 2020.

The secessionist push in Catalonia was strongly associated with a number of prominence of individuals who were born or are living in this North Eastern corner of the Iberian Peninsula, at the point where the Pyrenees encounter the Mediterranean. Never before in the ancient history of the diverse Spanish counties and communities has such a group of Catalonian figures been in the political and social limelight in Spain. Indeed, a good portion of the most high-profile characters on the Iberian cultural, social and political scene are dominated by noteworthy Catalonians, and no small amount of them are CatSpanish.

Today, the two most visible CatSpanish individuals on the domestic political scene are Inés Arrimadas and Gabriel Rufián (pictured below). Nowadays they are both at the very pinnacle of political life in Catalonia and across Spain. Arrimadas is among the most personable, charismatic and lively female voices that can be heard in the Spanish Parliament. Rufián on the other hand is among the most forward, macho, and comedic characters who has spoken in the Palace of Carrera de San Jerónimo (the Spanish Parliament) in recent years.

Left: Inés Arrimadas, current leader of the "Ciudadanos (Citizens)" party, (since early 2020) the main centrist-liberal party in Spain, and chief of the opposition in the regional parliament in Catalonia from 2017-2019. Right: Gabriel Rufián, leader of ERC group (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya) in the Spanish Parliament and one of the most prominent secessionist leaders.
Both Arrimadas and Rufián now serve in the national parliament in Madrid, after their respective rapid rise to stardom at the regional level in Barcelona. Both share youth and have come to be seen as aspiring leaders in the complex jungle of Catalan politics, having emerged as the secessionist conflict has played out. What’s more, both embody, better than anyone else, the depth of the internal divide that has become so deeply entrenched within Catalonia.

Inés Arrimadas has been a persistent and forceful spokesperson for the unionist resistance throughout the secessionist campaign. Rufián, meanwhile, has represented the coolest face of the secessionist push through a range of established outlets in Barcelona, Madrid and further afield. While solid data is lacking, I would not be surprised if these two figures represent the two most divisive characters for their respective opponents.

Arrimadas now leads, with an effort worthy of a better cause, the tiny and greatly diminished liberal movement that remains in the Spanish parliament following the disastrous November 2019 election under the leadership of Albert Rivera – her leader and mentor within the “Ciudadanos” party – which saw the party shed 80 per cent of its seats in parliament. Rivera was another ambitious CatSpanish figure, who was viewed by many as coming very close to reaching the helm of power in Spain, or at least an important post at the highest level of the Spanish government, before the 2019 electoral disaster.

Rufián, for his part, is now one of the main pillars of the central government in Madrid, since the parliamentary arithmetic makes the support of his ERC grouping to allow the PSOE leadership to cling to power. Naturally this has granted him a key role in the national legislature since January 2020. Rufián has taken to this role naturally and seems fully at ease with this position at the very heart of Spanish politics. Still only in his 30s, much is expected from Rufián, and his communication and leadership gifts are widely acknowledged.

Today, Arrimadas clearly has a much more difficult job, at least politically speaking. She became the main voice for the unionist community in Catalonia by winning, defying all serious forecasts, the regional elections of December 2017, after the failed secession attempt that autumn when large segments of the CatSpanish people placed their faith in her and in her party to counteract the dominance of the secessionist forces both on the streets and within the autonomous administration. In this election, the bulk of the citizenry in the major conurbations around Barcelona and Tarragona – a port city and capital of the province of Tarragona, a constituent part of Catalonia – withdrew their support for the typically dominant social democratic, green, neo-communist and neo-populist political formations, which saw “Ciudadanos” top the poll.

Starkly, while Arrimadas endured all kinds of harassment with great courage and grace, including threats and xenophobic attacks from some secessionist agitators, she failed to meet the expectations that her election had initially raised for many. It is true that she could not cobble together a majority of

xi. ERC (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya) is a traditionalist, separatist, centre-left party founded during the tumultuous years of the 2nd Spanish Republic in the 1930s.
seats to form a regional government, and she also missed the opportunity to consolidate in opposition to build and develop a solid alternative with winning potential. The strategy imposed by the huge expectations of her party in the parliament in Madrid reduced her role to one of a brave and articulate, but relatively ineffective, resistance, which ended up taking its toll, and her foray into Spanish politics ultimately diluted her role as a plausible alternative to the government of Catalonia.

Rufián, meanwhile has always enjoyed a more settled and comfortable political position, rising to prominence with enormous speed to a top position within the ERC hierarchy, the second largest party within the secessionist coalition in the regional government in Catalonia. Rufián easily satisfied all the requirements for ERC leadership, including a traditionalist ideology that is incorporated with a modern and suburban outlook that is central to the movement’s image of an inclusive independence for the region. An attractive, somewhat cocky politician, with a sometimes hectoring style, Rufián has a spontaneity, unflappability, and confidence that makes him the envy of many of his peers. Shortly after arriving in Madrid to co-lead the ERC parliamentary group, Rufián became widely known for sometimes brash and theatrical contributions and protestations even during solemn sessions of parliament House and for his outbursts and antics on Twitter which makes him a favourite character for much of the regional and national media. Rufián has rapidly become one of the real characters in Spanish politics, despite sometimes being derided as a shameless populist.

Rufián also endured attacks and harassment and was repudiated as a ‘traitor to the homeland’ by some opponents – or more specifically as a “botifler”xii – during one of the protests that followed the sentencing of several secessionist leaders by the Supreme Court in downtown Barcelona in October 2019, with the vituperations and accusations he encountered forcing him to leave the demonstration. His political evolution would ultimately lead to Rufián and ERC supporting PSOE in the central government only months later, after agreeing to engage in dialogue with Madrid to find solutions to the entrenched Catalonian situation, which saw him renounce any plan to implement independence, for the time being at least. Rufián knew that this would attract scorn similar to that which he and others had launched against the presidency of the regional government in the stormy days of autumn 2017 on the eve of the declaration of Independence.

Arrimadas and Rufián are therefore well aware of what it means to be subject to threatening intimidation by opponents in the tense cauldron of Catalan politics. Both illustrate, from opposite sides, the degree of confrontation that has been ignited by the divisions created by the secessionist venture. Both Arrimadas and Rufián speak Spanish as their mother tongue and each has an effective and flexible command of the Catalan language of the standard and nature that has become common among the bilingual citizenry with its diverse origins, including those who have experienced compulsory language instruction at
school. A version of the language that is usually called "instrumental Catalan" or "Catanyol: CatSpanish", this is often seen as a dialect or variant that is on its way to becoming dominant among Catalan language speakers, to the point that it can now often be heard in broadcasts and media debates throughout Spain.\textsuperscript{90, 97, 110}

Aside from being important politicians of substance, these two figures, from opposing sides of the secessionist debate, are often seen as celebrities within Spanish society. They can be seen fraternising and kissing one another goodbye when leaving television debates. This author would not be surprised if they each acknowledged a bit of mutual admiration for one another as colleagues and perhaps as Catalan citizens, and both share a common CatSpanish character, to a degree at least. This dual national identity feeling, which barely had a relevant political presence until recently and that has often lived on the periphery of the public image in Catalonia, albeit perhaps as a silent majority, has now emerged strongly, partly as a result of the harassment suffered by many during the secessionist push.
The void of central Spanish state

A good part of the frailty and impotence that the CatSpanish citizenry has felt throughout the secessionist campaign did not originate, it should be noted, in the ceaseless pressure of secessionism, which has indeed been suffocating at many points in the region’s recent history. Rather, the origins of the despair within this community lies in Spain’s neglect, detachment and ineffectiveness towards the region. There have been many opportunities to acknowledge that a good part of the problem originated in the stubborn and systematic propaganda from a powerful and disobedient regional administration that did not hesitate to use resources to be unfair to Spain while starting along its insurrectional path.

If a central authority receives a claim for sovereignty from a region that can show, moreover, that behind that demand there is a movement of between one and two million people who are willing to sustain the challenge, it seems prudent to take such a bid seriously and to try to counter it on all fronts. This includes all of the tools of engagement, persuasion and intelligence that any government has at its disposal.

What does not help, at all, is to dismiss and disparage any such movement as a social “soufflé" that never deflated, or as a temporary “transitory delirium" that would eventually fade. It’s also not helpful either to wait for a spontaneous collapse of the movement due to the fierce internal fights that take place between secessionist factions or to expect that a purely empathetic approach will dissolve the challenge. Javier Cercas clearly exemplified the deep CatSpanish helplessness on 29 November 2019, upon receiving a distinguished prize for journalism. He personally thanked King Philipp VI for his firm words on 3 October 2017, when the King pointed out that Catalonian citizens that did not want to lose their status as Spanish as well, were not alone, and that the democratic state and the Crown were there to watch over and to protect their rights and to guarantee their freedoms. It was the King himself who had to remember the basics, the most elementary democratic rules that had been neglected by a regional government that blatantly ignored the feelings of the majority of Catalans under their jurisdiction, especially those Catalonian citizens that feel and perceive themselves as Spanish citizens as well.

Such expressions of gratitude to the monarch, coming from a republican and leftist intellectual, should not be surprising, as Cercas had written a mournful protest, not too long before, that expressed the loneliness and helplessness of the CatSpanish community.
... The central pact of democratic Catalonia was formulated by his patriarch, Mr. Jordi Pujol, in this way: “Anyone who lives and works in Catalonia is Catalan”. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants arrived from all over Spain on postwar period, most of them very humble people, believed that pact. My parents believed it, too, and raised their children accordingly. It is true that my mother, 30 years old at that time, who came almost without studies and with five children, does not speak Catalan language, and therefore is one of those people whom the current President of Catalonia called, in a memorable article, “scavengers, scorpions, hyenas” and “human-shaped beasts”; but my sisters and I are not like her. We do not only live and work in Catalonia, but we adopted Catalan habits, we immersed ourselves in Catalonian culture, we learned Catalan language until we became fully bilingual, we married native Catalans, we educated our children in Catalan language and we even contributed to spread Catalan culture.

All in vain. Although we did our best to continue believing that we were Catalonians until recently, in September and October 2017, when everything exploded, we knew without doubt that we were not. Catalans, pure and undeniable Catalonians, were only those citizens who wanted to separate from Spain. Those citizens who don’t want it, either because of a sentimental attachment to Spain or because, like myself, we are unable to understand the virtues of a segregation and consider it an unjust and reactionary aspiration, we do not count as Catalans, at least for separatist politicians... For secessionist politicians currently in power, Catalans are not those of us who live and work in Catalonia, but only those who are good Catalans, loyal to the homeland and who vote what needs to be voted. The rest of us are not Catalanians, we do not count, we do not exist. Stop with that illusion; we probably never were Catalans, we never counted, we never existed.

This is what was hidden by the unanimous proclamations of the secessionist movement (“A single and united people”; “The streets will always be our property”...), at the disciplined parades of each 11 September (Catalonian national day), of the so called revolution of the smiles. A huge treason, indeed ...

Javier Cercas, The Great Treason
El País Semanal, Palos de Ciego, 6 June 2019

When the Spanish State wanted to react, it was too late. By the time they did, the bulk of influence and public presence, in all areas, was in the hands of the regional administration and secessionist activists. When the King or his Prime Minister scheduled an official visit to Catalonia, it became necessary to mount a security detail that rivalled those deployed by any Western government to support the visit of any American, Chinese or Russian president.

xiv. Jordi Pujol was the more prominent leader of contemporary Catalan nationalism and President of Autonomous Government of Catalonian from 1980 to 2003. His party (CDC: Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya) had been the dominant force in Catalonia for almost 40 years.

The plight of the CatSpanish community also extended to many foreign contexts as Spain’s detachment from the increasingly contentious Catalan situation could be easily perceived all around the world. Arguably the most outstanding success for Catalan secessionism lies in the foreign impact of the recent crisis. There is almost no way for Spanish or Catalan representatives to attend any international gathering or meeting, at any level, from the loftiest to the most trivial and ordinary, without people bringing up the story of the cosmopolitan and prosperous Catalonia, which aspires to obtain sovereignty through impeccably democratic procedures, in the face of a rigid and authoritarian central government that prevents it and imprisons its leaders. Here, the central administration can be cast as reacting as previous Spanish authorities did in the days of Franco’s dictatorship or, even worse, during the Inquisition. The belated and unwieldy “educating” initiatives of Spain’s Foreign Affairs Office, the network of “Cervantes Institutes” or the new “Spain Global” Office, have achieved little in this regard. The penetration and dissemination of the Catalan story of victimisation, meanwhile, has been so effective that it is necessary to recognise and acknowledge the regional government for its effective mobilisation of influence in this regard; the impact and influence over some of the best placed journalists and academics in every corner of the globe is quite remarkable.

It is worth asking if an international smear campaign against Spain, launched from the regional authorities in the Basque, Andalusian or Balearic regions, using lavish resources, would have had a similar impact. I suspect that it would have done, and this qualifies a bit the effectiveness of Catalonia’s foreign agencies. Arguably, regional rebellions in Spain typically receive good press coverage overseas, and even more so if this happen in any territory that is under direct Spain’s influence, as the West retains and cherishes memories of ancient insurrections against a vast and arrogant Spanish empire that provided seeds of liberation movements in both Europe and America. However, this does not excuse the apathetic and ineffective response from successive contemporary Spanish governments. On the contrary, it aggravates the diagnosis of a faulty diplomacy because those enduring opinions should be taken for granted with any foreign action or diplomatic intervention.

In any case, it is necessary to recognize that Javier Cercas is an excellent spokesperson for the threats that hang over more than half of Catalonia’s population, since the secessionists took command of the regional administration and set themselves on a collision course with Spain. Cercas is a perfect representative because he has already acquired high intellectual status and has global influence. His fictionalised chronicles and novels have lately received international plaudits of the highest order and his work and achievements has been covered by the most distinguished media outlets. Along with the tireless efforts of Mario Vargas-Llosa, the Peruvian Nobel Prize writer, these artists collectively form the best mouthpiece for the anxieties and trepidation afflicting the CatSpanish citizenry.
Nevertheless, despite the resonance of their voices and the international relevance that they enjoy, the authors have failed to persuade the bulk of the world’s “informed” opinion to support their worldview. Their persistent anti-populist and anti-nationalist discourse does not make even a dent in the often blatantly wrong and over-simple vision of the advanced, sophisticated and open Catalan province that is ‘caged’ by an authoritarian and oppressive Spanish state that is often presented to the world by supporters of Catalan independence. Typically, the presentation of the Catalans as victims, and the emotive image of “political prisoners” and “exiled” leaders, who are subjected to unremitting persecution by a tyrannical central authority, undermines any sympathy for the CatSpanish cause that may arise.
Secessionist top leaders

This inevitably leads us to Carles Puigdemont, probably the contemporary Spanish politician with the greatest international profile. No other figure in modern Spanish politics has reached the notoriety that he has. On 13 January 2020, Puigdemont secured the latest in a series of victories over the Spanish Courts which have been chasing him since he went into self-imposed exile the weekend following the failed declaration of independence on 27 October 2017, that he himself had proclaimed as president of the regional government of Catalonia. That January day in Strasbourg, Puigdemont participated in a session of the European Parliament, as a representative of the legions of Catalan citizens who had voted for him the previous spring, with all the rights and entitlements as an MEP, despite an outstanding extradition order that had been issued against him by the Spanish Supreme Court.

Puigdemont has spent two long years avoiding successive lawsuits since his flight into exile, when he crossed the French border incognito and moved on to Belgium, unbeknownst to even most of his former ministers, thereby avoiding arrest and the subsequent trial endured by several members of his deposed government. During his journey as a fugitive, he had to frequently visit police and judicial offices in Brussels, and even went through a brief period of imprisonment in a penitentiary in Northern Germany, where he was held after returning from a trip through the Baltic and Scandinavian countries. However, every time that it looked like international arrest warrants seemed that were going to take effect, he managed to convince foreign judges that his case and cause deserved caution. In Germany, the local Länder Court had agreed, in fact, to hand Puigdemont over to face the accusations of the Spanish Courts for the alleged embezzlement of public funds, but the Spanish judiciary wanted to also try him on charges of rebellion or sedition, as his subordinates in the Catalan Government had been. In the interim, and while the flurry of petitions and appeals is now delayed within the European Court system, he reaped political success.

Puigdemont has based himself in a dignified presidential residence in Waterloo, on the outskirts of Brussels, which he has managed to convert into the “unofficial”, though “de facto” headquarters of the delegation of the Catalan Government to the European institutions. Since this self-imposed “exile” Puigdemont has intervened, with notorious efficiency, in Catalan and Spanish politics. He frequently leads and directs, via videoconferencing and phone calls, the leading party of the coalition that currently governs the region since mid-2018. He has decisively intervened in the political agreements that allowed the conservative government to be deposed in Madrid and that led, after a year and a half of an interim central government led by the centre-left PSOE party, and ultimately to the consolidation of a social democratic/left populist coalition that now leads the Spanish administration. No one doubts
that in the negotiations and exchanges between the Spanish government and the Catalan secessionist government regarding the ongoing dispute in Catalonia, that he will play a vitally important role.

During the hectic autumn of 2017, while I was attending a Psychiatry Congress in Madrid, I was required to participate in a morning debate on a leading Spanish TV morning show on A3-TV that was led by Susana Griso. A good part of the debate consisted of a series of disparaging comments and withering criticism regarding Puigdemont brought forth by almost all of the other participants. I considered it necessary to remind viewers that Puigdemont was, in fact, a seasoned journalist with a solid track record in local media and in cultural management in Gerona province and that he had become Mayor of his city quite by chance and he was effective and efficient in this role. His arrival to the presidency of the regional government was also came as something of a surprise, having risen to the leadership of the disoriented remains of Convergence (CDC) party (see Note10) and was now preparing to lead the secessionist resistance from Belgium. All told, Puigdemont should be regarded as a person of substance and a highly effective political operator, but nobody took seriously my warnings that he would continue to be a highly relevant actor in Spain’s politics. His image as a “persecuted” and “exiled” president is a crucial ingredient of his resonance and of the good press coverage that the secessionist movement consistently receives. His presence and indefatigable activism have done much more to capture the imagination of the European and global media than all the efforts and posturing that the central Spanish authorities could mobilise. Puigdemont should be seen as a “global influencer” and never misses the splendid propaganda opportunities that his membership of the European Parliament affords.

The second most important leader of the Catalan secessionist movement is based primarily in the entertainment industry and his global impact has been and shall remain much more powerful than that of even the most tenacious politician, namely: Mr. Josep Guardiola, the world-renowned and highly decorated current head coach of Manchester City football club. As I wrote in my essay The Secessionist Passion:

... “In today’s technological and interconnected society both political movements and successful leaderships are forged if they get enough amplification on powerful media supports. To pull up and thrive, the combination of “prime-time TV plus web-networks spreading” is compulsory. It is a necessary condition. A must for taking off, although this does not guarantee getting to the top because competition is brutal. The irresistible emergence of Senator Barack Obama during the Democratic primaries for US presidential nominee, in 2008 elections, established that principle. “Obama” phenomenon, a handsome guy gifted with a sensational and caring voice and armed with the simplest advert of hope ever coined (“Yes, We Can!”) swept the country, became a global icon and generated replicas in many places with minor prophets who tried to emulate him.
That was the reference model for the new messiah: a great and cool guy, elegantly dressed and with a self-assured gaze and posture, using an enveloping and caressing voice to sell naive slogans with a bit of ideological ingenuity. This is enough to conquer the world if TV cameras adore you and social networks spread your psalms.

Recent vintage Catalonian secessionism has enjoyed that leadership for a decade, although exercised, I must say, with discretion. I suspect that the supreme leader of Catalan secessionism has been Mr. Pep Guardiola and I do not greatly exaggerate in saying that he can compete as an equal, in planetary resonance, with Barack Obama. Pep Guardiola took a great Spanish football club, the FC Barcelona, and converted it into the absolute ruler of the world stage in the most popular sport, soccer, over a five-year period (2008-2012). That gave him an unmatched visibility and even today is the world’s Most Valuable Coach and one of the most respected football experts, globally. A celebrity of the highest order who also meets the criteria listed at the beginning: “a great and cool guy, elegant demeanour, determined air, using an enveloping and caressing voice to repeat rather naive slogans with a bit of ideological ingenuity”.

Several international magazines granted him, by the way, the title as the ‘most elegant and attractive male of the universe’, surpassing the splendid stars of Hollywood who often win that award every year.

Since taking the reins of Barça FC team in 2008 and the guarantee of an overwhelming TV presence, Mr. Guardiola began broadcasting signals of full sympathy with aspirations of a sovereign Catalonia that were, at that time, surfacing with force at the region. Departing from a series of sweeping sports successes, he started the habit of expressing himself as a citizen who did not need other identity mark, outside being a Catalanian, to address the entire soccer’s world. From the newsrooms of the stadiums of Barça, Manchester, Wembley, Anfield, Emirates, Parc des Princes-Paris, San Siro-Milan, Rome’s Olympic, Madrid-Chamartin and many others places, he discussed and argued in Catalan language with the same normality and routine as he did in Italian, English or in Spanish languages. And when it came to talk about his country, his homeland, everyone understood to what place he was referring at. He conveyed to a global audience, but especially to his compatriots, the stubborn message that it was possible to exercise any role or function, without timidity, using a Catalan frame; that this was feasible from any tribune and without sheltering under a Spanish frame. No one had done anything like this – deliberately ignoring Spain, being a Spaniard, with such a persistence and calm elegance –, and from places of that impact. His tenacious wit together with his team great victories on the dazzling parades at the most glamorous windows of the planet, helped to convince fellow Catalans with secessionist dreams (majoritarian, probably, among Barça followers and their friendships circles), that everything was possible.
In the massive street demonstration on 11 September 2012 that inaugurated the series of outstanding processions that provided worldwide resonance to “Catalan secessionist challenge,” Mr. Guardiola closed the event with a final speech recorded and broadcast from a giant screen. And in the solemn parody of a “self-determination referendum”, 11 November 2014, he flew swiftly from Munich to cast his “vote”, in downtown Barcelona, offering his image and eager to answer questions to be disseminated “urbi et orbi”, expressing his joy and hopes for Catalanian freedom and full sovereignty. A few days earlier, he had led a highly select group of academic and artistic celebrities, publishing a letter of support to the “yearn for democracy” (sic) and in favour of Catalan self-determination that was aired by some of the most important newspapers of the globe.

So, the most influential citizen of a community, who had earned a well-deserved place to get listened by the world, was positioning himself giving unequivocal messages in favour of secession. Those are indeed functions of an international ambassador, to say the least.

In the summer of 2015, it was announced that Mr. Guardiola – who was at the time the head coach of German football giants Bayern Munich – had committed himself to the pro-secession political list of the “Junts pel Sí” coalition, that had been brought together by both the CDC and ERC parties together with a group of other secessionist movements, for the elections to the autonomous parliament that were scheduled for 27 September of that year. Guardiola was presented as a candidate for a parliamentary seat, occupying the last place on the list. In the following years, and from the even more prominent pulpit of the English Premier League following his move to Manchester, Guardiola has continued to be a high profile spokesperson for Catalan secessionism, taking advantage of his privileged position as a leading figure in world sport.

Guardiola and Puigdemont represent the pinnacle of Catalonia’s secessionist leadership, but the movement has created a high-profile and varied group of other celebrities who contribute, from their different positions, to the challenge against the central government in Madrid and to the promotion of the right to self-determination for Catalonia all around the world.
Madrid-Barcelona competition

Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau presides over and dominates the CatSpanish world since assuming office in the Catalanian capital in 2015, becoming the first woman to hold the office. Colau does not currently have any prominent competitors or challengers to her prominence and she easily sets the tone of public discourse in the region. A good part of Colau’s power flows directly from her occupying the mayoralty of Barcelona, and is not due to any individual outstanding virtues or skills on her part, given the political, economic and social significance that goes with her political leadership of one of the greatest metropolitan conurbations in Europe.

Barcelona city and its dynamic hinterland is the real melting pot of Catalonia and the biggest driver of the varied CatSpanish typologies. There is, of course, great diversity with the CatSpanish community, but the most frequent forms have taken root within the capital conurbation and in nearby industrial counties. It is there where the population is at its most diverse and where catanyol – the variant of the Catalan language that is gaining an increasing presence in literary production and that is often referred to as “CatSpanish”, by literary critics – is most widely spoken110, 90

In the Greater Barcelona area there is also a great sense of pride and belonging to an urban entity of strategic importance. Here, generations of citizens from very varied origins and backgrounds interact, sharing the experience of being inhabitants of a major city. As with any global city, given their style, their habits, and the complicated network of localities through which they move each day, residents of Barcelona often feel themselves as not just citizens of a major conurbation, but also as part of something bigger that can come with a sense of a shared existence and identity. Many cultivate a (mostly playful and health) rivalry with Madrid and believe that Barcelona has little to be envious about when it comes to Spain’s capital city. Some even have a tendency to look at it, along with the rest of Spanish cities, with a sense of superiority (that is, when they dare to take a cursory look at them). Inmaculada Colau is a typical example of the stereotypical confidence of Barcelona’s citizenry that oozes a progressive and ‘a la page’ style and that can be seen as behaving with entitlement and with a high degree of self-assurance, which helps to explain her predicament vis-a-vis the wide network of leftists and left-populist formations that exist across the country27 and her desire to play an undefined “mid-point” position in the ongoing Catalan secession crisis.

A conversation the author had with Cristian Campos* that was reported in ‘El Español’ online newspaper in October 2017. The independent Catalonia would be an extended and catholic Andorra entered into such issues.

xvi. https://www.elspanol.com/opinion/20171013/253974992_0.html
The conversation took place the morning after the first proclamation of Catalan Independence at the autonomous parliament in October 2017, which was followed for two weeks by a series of ultimatums between the Spanish government and the regional authority, amid increasing tensions that culminated with the final proclamation of Independence on 27 October 2017. On that placid morning on the Bellaterra Campus of the UAB (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) on the outskirts of the city, in a wide-ranging discussion, we discussed the relevance of the “Barcelona factor” to the secessionist push, among many other topics.

... You said that the independence movement has interesting characteristics. What do you mean?

I was speaking about an unexpected mass movement that specialists will study for decades. The secessionists mounted a movement that convinced and activated two million citizens. They gave these citizens a well-constructed narrative, with specific objectives and pathways to get them. They organised gigantic demonstrations in the streets. These demonstrations were at the same time civic, festive and aesthetically sensational. Behind them, there were great specialists in advertising, in marketing, in chromatic combinations and mass mobilization.

But that’s not the whole story.

They occulted in this way the silencing of the other half of the population. They attempted to establish an absolute domination over the other half of Catalan citizenry. If you pass over that, they did it well. So well that they captured the main international media, the main TV and broadcasting channels. These media contemplated a peaceful movement and a motivated rebellion characterised by a transversal participation of families from all social classes. The movement had also high chromatic and aesthetic qualities, with flags, t-shirts and performances that changed every year, with different songs, emblems, human castles... And that’s why it caught media attention, and also the attention of the world intelligentsia.

But have they truly persuaded the intelligentsia?

Nowadays, there are more specialists in mass movements, historians, economists, jurists, sociologists and political scientists, at the best world universities (Oxford, Yale, Cambridge, Harvard, UCLA, Max Planck, Sorbonne..), in favour of Catalan secessionist movement, than of the rest of Catalan citizenry, those who are against secession or in favour of Spain’s rights as a democracy.

The secessionists must have been very good, very efficient to get that. They had a great deal of ability to disseminate a doctrine and convince
plenty of the best world scholars that they are right. That Catalonia has the right to exercise self-determination. From influential networks at Research Centers and Universities they have disseminated that story.

**If there is so much intellectual excellence in a Catalonia within Spain, what do they complain about?**

The narrative is the opposite: “We have achieved this despite Spain. Imagine where we would be without Spain”. That’s their reasoning line. What they repeat is: “despite the hindrance, the inconveniences, the corrupt and mischievous characteristics of Spanish State, which is slow, distant and prone to indulge on counterproductive legal frameworks, in a competitive environment such as in science, for instance, we have achieved this”. Without Spain, they say, we would be the best: “Catalonia would be California or Massachusetts”. This is the secessionist storytelling and many scholars across the world believe it.

**Utopias always win in comparison with reality.**

Then they place a second element in the narrative: Barcelona. There is no need to talk about Universities or advanced Research Centers. Is there any Spanish city, or a city with Spanish influence, able to compete with Barcelona?

**Well... In what aspect in particular?**

In all of them. Who has created and accomplished Barcelona? Catalanian citizens. Barcelona is one of the most attractive cities in the world. No doubt. You get an objective survey and it will always be Barcelona. Not Madrid, Buenos Aires, Seville, Caracas, Lima, Santiago de Chile, Mexico or Bilbao. It will be Barcelona. You cannot be a citizen of the world if you do not visit Barcelona often. Because at Barcelona there are many actors at cutting edge of architecture, design, fashion, arts, chemistry, biology, medicine, high-tech. And without the hindrance of Spain, Barcelona would be one of the leading cities of the world. That is the story they tell and everybody believes it. Because it is true.

**Is it actually true?**

Of course it is. Or at least in a way. Can anyone argue that Barcelona is the most attractive Spanish city? That does not mean that Madrid is not attractive, cosmopolite, diverse, fun, amusing and splendid. But, during the last decades, the presence and relevance of Barcelona in the world has been much higher than Madrid. And that cannot be argued, regardless of indicators used. F.C. Barcelona has also been a much better soccer team than the rest of Spanish and South American teams.
Some people would argue that.

F.C. Barcelona has imposed itself as the dominant team, the most attractive, with most fans, the team who has generated more top players and also some of the football experts most appreciated around the world. Who are secessionists, by the way, in their political preferences. Who did all that? Catalonians. This is the story they tell, and as it is very consistent, it spreads all over the world.

Spain reacted late, and with a wrong diagnosis and a weak and badly built narrative. Spain is perplexed, surprised, doubtful, not understanding the challenge and creating messages that nobody is listening to. Catalonia secession bid made great editorials in the New York Times, Le Monde, Financial Times, The Guardian, CNN, BBC… “They will not achieve repercussion anywhere”, repeated the Spanish media. Please!!: They achieved repercussion everywhere.

With the due respect, maybe you are overrating a simple editorial by a German newspaper in comparison with what Angela Merkel is saying, who is more relevant and influential that all their press means. Or maybe you are mixing up Barcelona touristic attractiveness with its real importance in the international panorama.

It’s not only a tourist attraction. I am trying to explain the success that secessionists had all over the world. A different matter is that such success has been gained at the expense of the other half of the population. Silencing and harassing half of Catalan citizens. The secessionist plans are imposed and therefore totalitarian, they could sink Barcelona and its creative and innovative capacity. It can sink also the network of smaller Catalan cities. Because Catalonia is not only Barcelona. Now we have had clear signs warning that everything could be wrecked. If you create a movement and in order to win you subjugate half of the population, you place yourself close to disaster and at the edge of a civil conflict. However, the reason why they achieved such an impressive success around the world, is not obvious at all.

The contempt of the opposite side perhaps contributed.

They achieved all that in the open, not within a closed, totalitarian framework. So, the opponents could have reacted. Secessionists did not hid their intentions and goals. From the beginning, they said what their purpose was. The other half of Catalanian population, the subjugated citizens had time to organize themselves. It costs a lot, that’s true. The first signal of resistance and forceful power was last Sunday, with the Barcelona “unionist” big street demonstration. This was the first big mobilization in seven years.
All occurred within the framework of the EU. Catalanians were the first in Western European Union to embark on a process of segregation with prospects of success. People from Padania, Bavaria, Sicily, Tirol, Corsica or Brittany, who have as many identity and historical reasons as Catalanians, and who have suffered the same economic crisis, have not succeeded in enacting a comparable movement.

**And why the Catalans succeeded and people from Padania did not? Has it to do with genetics?**

Because of Spain.

**Spain?**

This is where Spain enters into the equation. None of these European regions have Autonomous peripheral administrations with as much power and political resources as Spanish regions. Spain democracy is an extremely decentralized and tolerant country. Democratic Spain is probably one of the most open, porous and cosmopolitan countries (remember that I have a tendency to exaggerate a bit: the adjectives, I mean).

**I see.**

Spain has transferred a high degree of effective power to Regional Governments. The «Comunidades Autónomas» are more resourceful and powerful than US federal States, or German Landers in terms of incidence in civic life. The Regional Government decides in which school your children will go, the language in which they will study, how can you transfer your family wealth, which police will impose fines on you ... Spain has set up a system that, without being nominally federal works as if it was so.

There is no country in Europe that has such a resourceful and varied regional powers with capacity to create and manage local police and judiciary stations, to build large and small hospitals, roads, highways and railways, sports centers, natural parks with special protection... But this is not only valid for Catalanian Government. It is valid for Basque Government, and for Galician, Extremadura, Andalucía Governments... The presence of the regional administration in Spain is stunning, it is sensational.

From all the topics discussed at this interview (which was one among many), the most important vector to sustain the successful narrative that the secessionists built and made sold across the whole world, was the enormous influence of Barcelona as a leading European – and global – city.
The Madrid-Barcelona Duality

There is not a single other case in Europe of a large peripheral city that competes with and challenges the standing of the capital city in the way that Barcelona does. London, Paris and Berlin have no true domestic adversaries. Neither do Amsterdam, Warsaw, Vienna, Budapest, Stockholm, Lisbon, Copenhagen or Athens. Rome felt Milan breathing down its neck for decades, but ultimately prevailed. The perennial defiance of Barcelona in the face of the powerful magnet of Madrid, acting with its proud conviction as the standard bearer of a different culture, does not occur anywhere else in Europe.

As much as Madrid surprises with its enviable economic and financial vitality, Barcelona has a creativity and dynamism that makes it an inescapable node in terms of its cultural, financial and commercial life, and of course in terms of sport. Barcelona’s vitality never lags, even if it sometimes loses some of its potency, even momentarily, due to its domestic tensions. Barcelona is powerful and has many comparative advantages to sustain this status. Many of the inhabitants of Barcelona feel in their hearts that they are part of a capital of an alternative world that could give the whole of the Iberian Peninsula a different tone and sense of self from the chaotic and hyperactive Madrid. For these reasons, what happens in Barcelona resonates across Spain as a whole.

The dissonance and disagreements between these two cities have played out periodically over the centuries, although the competition for primacy as a contemporary major hub only became crucial from around the end of 19th century. Since then, the two big Spanish ‘capitals’ have maintained a sustained and seemingly interminable duel that enriches them both, while generating continuous tensions.

Of course, as with other big cities, regardless of the criteria and categorisations that we design, the inhabitants of Barcelona are ultimately heterogeneous. However, arguably the most recognisable product of the great duality in Barcelona, at the time of writing, is the CatSpanish identity. Members of this community can speak fluently in Spanish and Catalan. With the knowledge of these two languages comes an association with two rich cultures and traditions, to which you can add the sense of belonging to a leading city in the Western Mediterranean which can bolster the CatSpanish identity, and it is well known that whoever dominates a Mediterranean hotspot can contemplate the entire world.

The nature and behaviour of Barcelona’s citizens, it should be said, also generates unavoidable tensions with the citizens in inner Catalonia, which is where the bulk of support of secessionism resides. It is clear that the heart of the CatSpanish essence and character is based in the Greater Barcelona area. Years ago, this was something that distinguished the city’s bourgeois elites from the stiff and stale demeanour of the elites in the rest of Spain, given what was seen as the city’s style and discreet elegance, above all. Now, this style has been
fused with the irrepressible contribution of the best-settled “neocharnegos” – i.e. migrants from the rest of Spain\textsuperscript{51} and has ended up permeating the ways of all CatSpanish, who now form the majority in the region.

The Valls gamble

Manuel Valls – who served as prime minister of France from 2014-2016 – had a very good grasp of the CatSpanish reality, arriving in Catalan politics in 2019, essentially by himself with only a small group of associates, aiming to capture the mayoralty of Barcelona. His attempt to reorient a brilliant political career, which had brought him from the splendid rooms of the Hôtel Matignon\textsuperscript{xviii} in Paris, to the sober, historical and elegant House of the City in Barcelona, reflects a personal adventure with the tones of an eighteenth-century adventurer. Having failed to reach the Elysée Palace in Paris, after a failed bid for the French presidency in 2017, Valls’ transition to the cauldron of municipal politics in the Catalanian capital displays both the individual wit and political acumen of this unique politician.

In the hands of someone with strong leadership skills and clear ambition, the mayor’s office in Barcelona can provide an invaluable platform, in terms of global impact and reach, that rivals the most prominent European capitals. By comparison, even the Moncloa Palace\textsuperscript{xx} in Madrid has been overwhelmed by many internal problems in recent years and has lost momentum to intervene significantly in the major global current issues in the world today.

Ultimately, Valls only managed to consolidate a “pied a terre” in the Barcelona City Council, but his vote confirmed Inmaculada Colau as mayor of the city for a new mandate. His tactical flexibility baffled those who had been his allies, but it served to establish him as an important actor on the Spanish scene. The icing on the cake was his famous romance, which unfolded at ultrafast speed, with the upper strata of Barcelona’s high bourgeoisie. He will continue to shine among prominent Catalonians, despite his strong associations with France, which for some is cause for suspicion.

Such stigma, that Valls’ current or potential rivals can be eager to highlight, may prevent him from rising to greater prominence in Spanish politics. It will be regrettable, because Valls not only captured the often hidden and enormous force of the CatSpanish world better than anyone, but he also formulated a clear political action programme to put Barcelona at the centre of the politics of the Iberian Peninsula, and to catapult CatSpanish dynamism, bereft of provincial shyness and inhibitions, into its wider European context.

\textsuperscript{xviii.} Hôtel Matignon: the official residence of the France Prime Minister, in Paris.
\textsuperscript{xx.} Moncloa Palace: the official residence of Spanish Prime Minister, in Madrid.
Dual identities: “As Catalan as Spanish”

In surveys regarding political preferences, when inquiring about the “feelings of belonging” and questions of national identity, Catalan citizen are usually compelled to choose between the following alternatives.

Table 2: National identity feelings of Catalan citizenry. With which of the following statements do you most strongly identify? “I feel…”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity Type</th>
<th>CEO Barom March 2020</th>
<th>CEO Politics Dec. 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only Catalan</td>
<td>22.3 per cent</td>
<td>19.2 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Catalan than Spanish</td>
<td>22.6 per cent</td>
<td>19.5 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As Catalan as Spanish</td>
<td>39.2 per cent</td>
<td>43.6 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Spanish than Catalan</td>
<td>4.1 per cent</td>
<td>3.7 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only Spanish</td>
<td>6.5 per cent</td>
<td>6.7 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know/NA</td>
<td>5.3 per cent</td>
<td>7.3 per cent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The results that appear in Table 2 show that the largest segment in Catalonia, is the one that chooses a dual sense of national identity, namely those who: “feel as Catalan as Spanish”. Between these two surveys, that were undertaken by the official polling agency of the autonomous government, this cohort represented 43.6 per cent and 39.2 per cent of those surveyed in December 2019 and March 2020 respectively.

The monochord citizens, those who claimed to feel an identity as “only Catalan” oscillated from 19.2 per cent to 22.3 per cent between these surveys. That group represents the most solid stronghold of the secessionist movement that is long established and seems essentially immovable. In contrast, those who subscribe to a “Spanish only” monothematic identity represents only a small minority segment, of between 6.5 per cent and 6.7 per cent across the surveys. In the CEO Barometer of March 2020, of the 2,000 citizens chosen from across the Catalonian counties who agreed to answer such questions, those who said they felt “more Catalan than Spanish” reached 22.6 per cent, and “more Spanish than Catalans”, 4.1 per cent. If we add these two figures to the 39.2 per cent that professed a dual/balanced identity, this amounts to 65.9 per cent of citizens who possess the ingredients of a shared identity, as either Catalan or Spanish, albeit to varying degrees, but with a predominance of the core dual identity type (i.e. as Catalan as Spanish). At the CEO poll on Political Perceptions, carried out in December 2019 with a similar methodology, with another sample of
1600 citizens, that total figure for those with the ingredients of a dual national identity rose to 66.8 per cent.

These measures represent very crude approximations to "Spanishness" and "Catalonianess" feelings, of course. These studies have received well-deserved criticisms, because to more effectively approach and gauge such intimate perceptions with adequate methodological rigour, it would be necessary to use different scales that could disclose various features or components of the phenomenon and to also give a better account of margins of error. However, this way of undertaking surveys, with five neat gradations or closed compartments, has a long tradition, and it has been used in many places at different times and it is the preferred approach for many official survey agencies. This approach can make much more sense when surveys applying similar methods are repeated at regular intervals. In any case, notwithstanding these limitations, there is evidence that this approach reflects, in an acceptable way, the different national affiliations and identities that can be observed in the specific case of Catalan society.

These figures in Table 2 have changed little since 2014. The most notable variation sees an increase in the number of citizens moving towards the monochord "only Catalan" feeling, at the expense, above all, of the mixed or dual identity (see Figure 6, section 10, p. 38). Such abrupt oscillation occurred, moreover, over a relatively short interval, between 2012-2014. In the six long years that have elapsed since then, the scenario has hardly changed. This suggests that the strong political push that was launched during the secessionist campaign encountered a hard obstacle that was difficult to overcome. A bloc formed within the population of those that profess to carry ingredients of a "hybrid" Catalan and Spanish identity – that is to say, the core of people with "CatSpanish" identity feelings – who, probably, do not see compelling enough reasons for their particular identity to be eroded or annulled. This nucleus of resistance against the pressure of secessionism, in addition, makes up the majority of public sentiment, although it has also displayed a lack of assertiveness and coherence on different occasions at successive elections; arguably, this behaviour is to be expected during a period where the citizenry were asked to go to the ballot box on a number of occasions over a relatively short period of time, with no fewer than five regional elections and five general elections taking place between 2010-2021.

**CatSpanish hybridation**

Being comfortably around 65 per cent of the Catalan citizenry indicates that the CatSpanish identity goes far beyond the traditional "charnegos" and the subsequent "neocharnegos" (i.e. the migrants who have arrived more recently from the rest of Spain), which are now beginning to vindicate themselves. "Charnegos" is a derogatory name given by Catalonian natives to migrants arrived from the rest of Spain, in a series of waves throughout the 20th century.
a dual and comparable self-identification with both Catalonia and Spain, rests on the complex social fabric that is derived from the huge migratory flow from other Spanish regions, that settled in Catalonia between the 1950s-1970s.

This domestic migration formed the bulk of the industrial working class of most Catalan cities. They laboured in textile factories, in the chemical and automobile complexes and in erecting the enormous urban expansion that underpinned the arrival of the region as a global tourist destination. They filled the suburbs and conurbations around Barcelona and Tarragona, above all, but also the network of medium sized villages throughout Catalonia. They formed the networks of “the other Catalans” portrayed by Candel, and many got used to bearing the xenophobic nickname of “charnegos” with resignation, which emphasised their condition as disinherited outsiders. Today, the derogatory impact of this term has waned to an important extent, and the preferred denigrating nicknames for “outsiders” of Iberian origin are “ñordos” or “españordos”.

In his book “Yo, charnego” (2020), López Menacho celebrates the features of continuity between the migratory flows that founded the great demographic and economic expansion of Catalonia in the late 20th century, with the inflows that continue to this day:

... “The neocharnegos are part of the digital precarious task forces, they are riders of some technological company, valets at Amazon, drivers of Cabify or domestic workers through a mobile app. They share a flat. Today we do not arrive in a flood but in a constant trickle, due to the lack of job opportunities at the source. The original charnegos lived in suburbs, barracks or neighborhoods with serious deficiencies, crowded into flats, while the neocharnegos live in neighborhoods with all services and have their own room. They had no studies and they were factory workers or day laborers, but now the neocharnegos have completed secondary, if not higher, studies and work at the service sector mainly. They no longer arrive by train but on low-cost flights. Catalonia is no longer its first destination, it comes behind countries like Germany, England or Ireland.

Catalonia today, and especially Barcelona, ends up being a destination that fulfills the expectations of the domestic migrant, a sort of modern Hollywood for the Andalusian, Murcian or Extremaduran youth, main generators of charneguism. It is the place where dreams come true, basically, because it has more opportunities in all professional sectors... Today, in Catalonia there are around 1,200,000 foreigners from all over the world. Only the internal migration of the first charnegos would equal what now represents the foreign migration.

The architecture of the city, its buildings, its urban furniture, has nothing to do with what it was. There are suburbs (and within these, neighborhoods) especially prone to receive foreign people. And they do it for historical reasons. In some way, the new charnegos generations take advantage
of the history of their predecessors, walking their same path...; This is, by far, the greatest heritage that old charnegos: a historical legacy in the form of brick and asphalt, together with survival manuals...; There was a normalization of success in those charnego neighborhoods; but just as important as that, was to make the silent work that created the society that we found today: workers and modest merchants, school teachers... a reason for celebration. Women and men converting a wasteland into an ambulatory with the strength of the neighborhood links, who faced the bulldozers, who cut the streets...; Barcelona citizenry who, after exhausting themselves in the assembly lines, in the roar of factories, drew strength from their own poverty to turn life into democracy

The neocharnego no longer has to do such extra effort, because the work is already done. His perspective is another, more oriented to the strengthening of the socioeconomic conquest that the predecessors began, often without even knowing it. And the nickname charnego no longer points in the way it did. Now, fear of foreigners and xenophobia targets other migrant groups. The Arab community receives prejudice whenever there is an attack in the first world...; the new migrations come to occupy the space that charneguism had in the seventies and eighties. In Olot and Vic, two of the most representative villages in inland Catalonia, the migrant population is 22 percent and 33 percent respectively. Guissona, Castelló d’Empúries, Salt or Sant Pere Pescador have a percentage close to or greater than 40 percent of migrants. Of all the nationalities, Moroccan and Romanian are the majority...; old charnegos have worked many times as a glue: they understand both migrant and natives. They understand those who want to conquer their destiny, but also show a tendency to protect a space that they have made their own...

The hybridization processes within those with CatSpanish identities, however, go much further and encompass a much greater proportion of the citizenry than those bounded by charneguism and neocharneguism together.

We have seen that there are approximately 25 per cent of individuals who report a dual identity with biased weights, with slightly more than 20 per cent with a preference for the Catalan side (“more Catalan than Spanish”), and 5 per cent with a firm bias towards Spanishness (“more Spanish than Catalan”) (see Table 2). This is an obviously CatSpanish cohort that would require a lot of work and care to be described in any detail. Moreover, it would come as no surprise if some of those who impulsively jumped on the bandwagon of the “Catalan only” monochord identity during the climax of the secessionist push, might in fact be found to harbour remnants of CatSpanish identity as well.

But all of these are merely targets for ulterior and systematic investigations that take time to undertake. Thorough inquiries must explore not only descriptions based on national identity feelings during opinion surveys, but also objective
measures relating to economic stratification, educational segmentation, and the levels or territorial distribution of the citizenry through urban, suburban and rural areas. The studies already carried out on the different degrees of economic mobility in Catalonia, based on aggregations of native or imported surnames, or those detecting genetic traces of ancient or modern migratory flows and their differential distribution according to different surnames, predict a splendid and potentially challenging variability.

Foreigners

Alongside the citizenry who can trace their roots in the Catalan region over decades, there are truly outsiders who have arrived to Catalonia especially over more recent decades. Some were attracted by the economic boom that took place around the turn of the millennium and in the wake of the 1992 Olympics, when Barcelona became a worldwide tourist attraction, and others by the consolidation of Catalonia as a major economic hub in the Western Mediterranean, despite the aftermath of the financial crash of 2008-2012.

In total, foreigners now exceed more than one million residents according to the latest official records, within the region’s total population of 7.5 million. Those coming from elsewhere in the European Union, as well as from North African and South America, dominate this cohort with proportions of above 25 per cent for each of these three groups, followed not far behind by migrants from Asia, who already make up close to 15 per cent of the foreign population.

There is, therefore, a huge contingent of foreign but internal “observers” to what has been recently going on in Catalonia. The identification of newcomers to the region with CatSpanish sentiments is naturally easier for Latin-Americans, for obvious reasons, given the range of linguistic, historical and cultural affinities that these cohorts share, and identifying as CatSpanish will be less natural for the rest. All this is widely known, and the official agencies of the secessionist government devote substantial resources to trying to cultivate links with these communities, hoping to form bonds with those citizens who decide to establish themselves and their families within the region. To better understand these variations will require detailed studies, involving each of these different communities, to discern their potential weight and influence over the secessionist and unionist forces.
Cantonalism and Cainism in Spain

A point that rarely ceases to amaze me is how the force of Spanish influence is maintained across the successive generations of CatSpanish citizens, because reasons to repudiate the national identity that Spain offers are far from lacking. Here I’m not talking about the reasons most often referred to, including: corruption, patronage and the inefficiency of many gears of the state machinery and its surrogates in the regional administrations; the picaresque and shameless advantage afforded to a small portion of Spaniards; the masquerade of sham progressivism that so often appear in every corner of the Iberian Peninsula. No, it’s not all of this that truly demoralises, because any dispassionate observer knows that these are widespread vices and that there is no guarantee that the Catalan citizenry could offer an improved profile as has been shown in the past.

What is truly hopeless though, is the powerful Iberian tendency towards stark and savage sectarianism, and towards fratricidal and seemingly hopeless factionalism. The past two years have shed much light on such propensities. The most abrupt encounters have occurred, precisely, around the discrepancies over the “Catalan secessionist bid” and have been stirred by the spokespersons from across all political formations and have often been carried out with ferocity and bitterness.

This belligerence at the top contrasts with the remarkable patience that most Spanish citizens have shown in the face of mistreatment and insults that came in abundance from Catalonia. The Spanish people have known how to metabolize with commendable stamina the unpleasant drip-drip of expressions of contempt coming from many parts of Catalan society. Except for the sporadic outbursts and cries of ‘A por ellos!’ (“Go for them!”), that appeared in some small corners of Spanish society during the stormy days of Autumn 2017, as police patrols were dispatched towards Catalonia, what predominated overall was a sense of containment and prudence. This stoicism is notable, as it must be remembered, that on many occasions the most disdainful and demeaning comments came from the highest echelons of Catalan society. There is a detailed record of examples of hate speech from prominent Catalan politicians, including the President of the Regional Government and of the Autonomous Parliament, towards their Spanish neighbours.

The phlegmatic reaction of ordinary Spaniards who, while airing their understandable fatigue at the reiteration of the "monotopic", preferred to receive any insult with patience. However, the widespread sense within Spanish society that "these Catalans are very peculiar and stubborn, you know, but the tantrum over the secession will end up" was not taken up by the Spanish leadership. On
the contrary, there has been much sectarian rhetoric emanating from leading figures in Spain that is designed to manipulate the situation and its inherent tension so as to accentuate differences and to earn political advantage.

Most Catalonian citizens lived with great relief and undisguised hope during the short period between 28 October 2017 and 2 June 2018. In other words: the period that Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution ruled in Catalonia, with the suspension of the autonomous government and with all power being transferred to the central administration. This was a period of relief for many after long years of tension. While public spaces were filled with yellow ribbons (the preferred symbol of the secessionists) and protest insignia calling for the immediate release of the imprisoned leaders, daily life became much more bearable for many citizens, as the succession of countless clashes between the autonomous and central governments ceased to dominate public discourse. Everything seemed to flow with unusual normality during this time and it was soon realised that the concerted action of the big national parties could curb a regional drift that had become a threat to civil harmony in the region.

But that confluence between major Spanish parties to redirect what many proclaimed to be the country’s biggest problem – an attempt of secession by a constituent part of the nation – was broken, as soon as a new horizon appeared, that allowed other alliances to be established to seize power in Madrid. The left-wing central governments that have since been installed, one with PSOE leading a minority government, which was followed by a social democratic/left populist coalition, established points of contact with the secessionist movement given that they rely on the support of the regional parties to stay in power. Since then, Spanish factionalism has been accentuated to surprising, and inexact, extremes: on the one hand, there are the “open-minded” Spaniards – tolerant, egalitarian and cosmopolitan (often the self-identified ‘left’ faction) – and on the other hand, there are the “authoritarian and reactionary” Spaniards (the right, by any traditional definition), even though these are inappropriate and insufficient stereotypes. Support for the centre or liberal opinion has almost totally evaporated. Meanwhile, while the Catalan and Basque secessionists have used these polarising shifts to remarkably good effect, by shoring up support among their members, a further outcome of this climate has been the appearance of a new political formation on the far-right, which has established itself vigorously in recent elections.

The most immediate and direct losers of this merciless confrontation between the two antagonistic and irreconcilable Spanish poles, are the CatSpanish citizens themselves. The large segment of the Catalonian population with feelings of dual identity, feeling both Catalan and Spanish, and who cultivate aspirations of continuing with these hybrid ways of living and functioning, observe how the “Catalan problem” once again sees them caught in the crossfire between the two different factions.
Mr. Andreu Mas Colell, an oracle for secessionism and who arouses a curious veneration among many academic audiences within Spain, clearly illustrated this at the end of 2019, in “El País”. To bless the formation of the left-wing social democratic/left populist coalition supported by Catalan secessionist forces, he stated the following.

... “The Catalan political conflict is entering a phase of negotiation, formal and informal. Now it matters that, collectively, we are not mistaken again... In the negotiation we have four sensitivities, which I’m not trying to associate with political parties. On the one hand, we have, in Catalonia, the secessionists aiming for full sovereignty, for whom a nation must have a State, and also those citizens who also claim for sovereignty but who can relativize secession and put more emphasis on the preservation of the nation and self-government (the “sobiranistes aindependentistes”). On the other hand, in Spain scenario we would have dialogue and non-dialogue sensitivities. The last two general elections seem to demonstrate that the dialogue field is majoritarian, albeit narrowly.

I think that the strategic interaction of these four sensibilities should give way to a government that fosters dialogue and negotiation. From the Catalan side, promoting it is what is technically called a dominant strategy: it is the best in any circumstance. For “sobiranistes aindependentistes” their natural attitude will be to favor the formation of this Government. The secessionists must do the same because, if they are so convinced of the failure of negotiation, it will be by demonstrating that they are willing to negotiate – and, I add, limiting themselves to ordered and non-disruptive protests – they will gain reasons and expand the basis for the next phase of the dispute. Obviously, the dialogue strategy will then also be the best for Spanish dialogue sensitivity”...

Note that in this apparently innocuous approach, the actors are reduced to two pre-defined poles on opposing both sides, that together fill the strategic board: in Catalonia there are only citizens demanding sovereignty, while the rest simply do not exist, while in Spain there is only one type of practicable people, namely those who are open to dialogue. For Mas Colell, the rest may perhaps exist, but they do not count.

Reducing the complexity of actors in any social conflict to a simple caricature of opposing strategies of cooperation or non-cooperation is a less and less acceptable approach that is taken by some economists and scholars. In general, such commentators are surprised if someone with executive responsibilities decides to listen to them. A conspicuous example of this was how the former minister of regional government Ms. Clara Ponsatí would use strategies based on “game theory” by the secessionist government to explain the Catalan situation. The bemused and often frosty reception she experienced for such analyses in the media and public discourse led her to return rather quickly to her university teaching in Scotland.
The abovementioned approach of Mr. Mas Colell is outstanding, to say the least, in how it implies erasing, at a stroke, the biggest segment of Catalonian citizens: those devoid of sovereignty aspirations and who never stated that their hopes or preferences included to "preserve the nation". But if, in addition to that, it is openly proposed that in Spain there are only two classes of subjects, namely those open to dialogue and those more primitive ones who probably have not reached the evolutionary stage that permits the exchange of opinions and arguments, the analysis acquires worrying and scandalous overtones.

This is more than worrisome, in fact. In a subsequent morning debate on Madrid SER radio, xxiv it turned out that there was unanimity among the participants that Mr. Mas Colell’s homily was a sensational and important contribution to the public debate. Upon hearing this, the temptation to escape urgently from Spain was almost instantly aroused.
Longitudinal profiles of Catalan citizenry

At the middle of this journey through the features and nuances of the CatSpanish world, it is convenient to reflect again on the core of the initial conflict, namely the fracture of Catalan citizenry into two opposing sides that has been created by the secessionist campaign. It must be remembered from the outset that, when a political conflict focuses on a nodal and non-negotiable discrepancy between the pro-secession and anti-secession factions, as is the case here, the chances of digging a trench between two strongly opposing sides is extremely high. And when that happens in a context where it is easy to draw lines of friction or cleavage that run alongside elements of clear ethnocultural or social signifiers (i.e. language, ancestry, socio-economic status), then the possibilities that such opposing sides can get stuck in positions that are ready for open combat is even higher.\(^\text{1, 32, 33, 47, 69}\)

The recent boom of chronicles, essays, TV productions and plays that have been precipitated by the secessionist bid may serve as a measure of the extent of confrontation that exists within Catalan society as well as in wider Spanish society. No similar flood of self-interrogation has occurred in Spain over the last eighty years. It is clear that this entrenchment will continue to reverberate for years. This situation has long surpassed the cultural productions associated with the deadly Basque conflict, starring ETA, during the last quarter of the 20th century, and perhaps it might come close to the cultural aftereffects left by the immense shock of the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939, or the crisis of the 1898 Spanish-American War, which saw the country lose the final remnants of Empire, including Cuba and the Philippines.

The main aim behind the several studies that preceded this essay\(^\text{76, 77, 78, 79}\) was to accrue a series of longitudinal findings that could shed light on important vectors that primed the appearance of the antagonistic fissure between unionist and secessionist communities in the Catalan region. By building upon the complete series of data from official CEO polls, the evolving changes of national identity feelings (‘sense of belonging’), throughout the period 2006-2020, are displayed in relation to other variables. The longitudinal analyses included 92,038 respondents from 47 surveys and several procedural tools were also applied to detect important breaking points linked to singular events that might have accentuated the ongoing and intense polarization around the issue of secession.

Firstly, attention is focused on any variations of sense of belonging feelings (national identity) across two significant segments of Catalan citizens, namely: those whose family language is Catalan and those whose family language is Spanish. This is a crucial starting point, as previous findings, either from

survey data or from electoral results, had long-established the priority of this ethnolinguistic cleavage origins. Secondly, attention is focused on the assessment of the evolving changes of sense of belonging depending on media preferences – that is, between the official TV and radio outlets controlled the regional government (broadcasting exclusively in Catalan language), and any other TV and radio outlets, the importance of which had also been established previously. Since media consumption trends and language/ascendancy origins are closely interrelated within the region, the present discussion highlights the role played by the interactions between these ingredients on the deepening of the fissure that separates secessionists and unionists. The role of other relevant economic and social transitions that contribute to the pattern of traits that currently characterise the political entrenchment between secessionists and unionists is also explored.

The idea behind this detailed itinerary through an unexpected, serious and stagnated political crises, at the heart of a European democracy, was to try to illuminate relevant pathways that may help not only to understand the origins and development of the conflict, but also to hopefully to reduce or stymie some of its more worrying legacies.

Figure 7 displays the evolving profiles of national identity feelings ('sense of belonging') along the period, 2006-2020. This is a qualitative variable with six distinct values at these surveys: "only Spanish", "more Spanish than Catalan", "as Spanish as Catalan", "more Catalan than Spanish", "only Catalan" and 'DK/NA' (don't know or no answers). Percentages were estimated from responses to 47 surveys over the period 2006 – 2020 on sample sizes of between 1500 and 2500 persons (one survey in 2017, exceptionally had only 1338 participants), with a total of 92,038 respondents.

Throughout these years, the total increase in those who feel "only Catalans" reached 13 per cent, while the drop in the number of citizens who feel "as Spanish as Catalan" reached 7 per cent, signalling a substantial variation towards narrowing the relevance of dual CatSpanish national identity feelings.
Figure 7: National identity feelings (sense of belonging) for all Catalan population (2006-2020)

Elaborated from CEO-Barometer survey microdata. Observe a clear reduction of percentages of people with dual identity "equal Spanish than Catalan" (green), and the increase of percentage of people with a single identity "only Catalan" (red). The proportion of people with single identity "only Spanish" (blue) remained stable. The proportion of "DK/NA" is omitted.

The more remarkable facts in Figure 7 are the changes around 2012 regarding the size of the two critical segments defined by national identity. In that year, the dual national identity group "as Spanish as Catalan" initiated an abrupt descent of more than 15 percentage points from which it has not yet recovered, while the single national identity "only Catalan" group saw an abrupt escalation of more than 15 points which has not yet been reversed. Such variations among segments that are so critical for cohesion of the whole society clearly demanded further inspection involving other variables.

The marks at Figure 7 signal events that might have been relevant to any understanding of the evolution of the variables throughout the period. This included: the date when a new home rule statute was approved (New Statute 2006); the resolution of the Spanish High Court (Tribunal Constitutional-TC) that sanctioned 14 articles (from a total of 223) as contrary to the Spanish Constitution and restricted the preamble and another 27 articles (June 2010); the high point of the protests of the 15M social movement (15M Peak Protests, June 2011); the regional elections of 25 November 2012 (25N); the illegal consultation regarding independence of 9 November 2014 (9N); the regional elections of 27 September 2015, (27S); the illegal referendum regarding secession on 1 October 2017 (1 Oct) and the regional elections of 21 December 2017 (21D). The crucial breaking
points detected by the package, available for R, ecp.xxvi are marked as red lines within following the plots.

These evolving changes become more evident when studying national identity feelings in the segments obtained by dividing citizens through their family/mother language.xxvii There are two quantitatively important linguistic groups within the region (Figures 8 and 9), namely: citizens whose family language is Catalan and citizens whose family language is Spanish, representing 35.4 per cent and 57.1 per cent of total population respectively (at the last included survey, March 2020). People with both Spanish and Catalan as family/mother languages represented an average of 4.3 per cent of the population, while other cases were negligible. The small group whose family/mother language was "both" (Spanish and Catalan), exhibited an intermediate behaviour, so its graph has been omitted.

Figure 8: National identity feelings (sense of belonging) among citizens with family/mother language Catalan (35.4 per cent of total population, March 2020 survey)

Source: Derived from CEO-Barometer survey microdata. Observe the spectacular rise of the single identity "only Catalan" (in red), which began around 2010. Observe the opposite trend for the dual identity "as Spanish as Catalan" (in green) over the same period.

xxvi. The ecp is an R package designed to carry out nonparametric multiple change point analysis of multivariate data (47a)
xxvii. Until summer 2011 the survey question explicitly asked for "family language", after that for "childhood language in the family". This change resulted in a decrease of percentages of people who answered "both languages" and increases on the Spanish-mother language group, but it did not significantly affect other variables within the surveys immediately before and after that change
Figure 9: National identity feelings (sense of belonging) among citizens with family/mother language Spanish (57.1 per cent of total population, March 2020 survey)

Source: Elaborated from CEO-Barometer survey microdata. Observe a moderate decrement of dual identity “as Spanish as Catalan” (green).

For the family-language Catalan group, the crucial breaking points on national identity feelings appeared between the second and third CEO 2010 surveys (decimal number approximately 2010.4 on the graph), and the second and third CEO 2012 surveys (decimal number 2012.65). For the family-language Spanish group, the breaking points in these profiles were between the second and third CEO 2011 surveys (decimal number 2011.65), and the second and the third CEO 2013 surveys (decimal number 2013.7). The more outstanding change appeared within the family-language Catalan group, which jumped towards a monolithic “Catalan only” identity, notably around the regional elections of 25 November 2012.

**Important media effects on the current social division**

The relevance of media preferences was also analysed. The ‘news’ variable was built taking into account the answers relating to whether respondents preferred to obtain news through regional public media (TV or radio broadcasting exclusively in the Catalan language) or via other media. This is a dichotomous variable with two possible values: “regional” or “other”. The first analysis (Figure 10) were directed towards the variations in national identity as “only Catalan”, distinguishing also between sub-groups that had Catalan as the family-language and Spanish as the family-language.
Figure 10: Changes in "only Catalan" national identities in different population segments depending on family/mother language and media preferences (i.e. public regional media or not)

Source: Elaborated from CEO-Barometer survey microdata. In 2006, "only Catalan" national identity amounted to 14.2 per cent of the entire population, whereas at the last survey (March 2020), this had reached 22.2 per cent. Attached to each label, on the right column, appear the percentages of each group in the March 2020 survey.

There were important changes relating to "only Catalan" national identity throughout the period, which were dependent on family/mother language but also on having been exposed to regional public media or not. The relevance of these covariations where highlighted through robust statistical contrasts.

The same analysis was repeated for variations on respondents whose national identity was "as Spanish as Catalan" (Figure 11), obtaining also substantial distinctions dependent on family language and media preferences.
Figure 11: Changes in “as Spanish as Catalan” national identity in different population segments obtained by considering family/mother language and news preferences (i.e. consumption of public regional media or not).

Source: Elaborated from CEO-Barometer survey microdata. In 2006, “as Spanish as Catalan” identity was 42.5 per cent of the entire population, whereas in the last survey (March 2020), this had dropped to 39.1 per cent. Attached to each label, on the right column, appear the percentages of each group in the March 2020 survey.

By repeating the analysis relating to general public media or private plus public media, excluding the regional outlets, no increased association appeared with respect to feelings of “only Spanish” national identity, as is illustrated in Figure 12. This shows the notorious stability of feelings of national identity within the segment of Catalanons (more than 30 per cent, according to these surveys), relating to people who claimed to follow political news through Spanish TV channels and radio broadcasting. Hence, although no media is ever truly scrupulously neutral, the strong biasing influence of regional media on national identification is absent in this case.
Figure 12: Evolution of feelings of national identity (sense of belonging) for Catalanians who follow news from Spanish broadcasters (e.g. TVE, A3, TV5, La Cuatro, La Sexta)

Source: Elaborated from CEO-Barometer survey microdata. This segment was 35.4 per cent of the entire population in 2006, and in the last survey (March 2020) it was 32.6 per cent. Notably that there is no evidence of polarization dependent on media following here.

By combining all these measures, a summary of the notorious gap between secessionists and unionists was built that was dependent on questions of both family language and the communication bubbles that are created by following/not following regional media (Figure 13). This was followed by an estimation of the probability of being either secessionist or non-secessionist using only these ingredients. The Figure shows that depending on the family/mother language (Catalan vs Spanish) and taking into account whether a citizen follows the news through public regional media or not, it is possible to predict the probability of supporting secession in a hypothetical referendum with a magnitude of 16.5 per cent for “D” segment (Catalonians with family language as Spanish who do not follow regional media), to a magnitude of 86.5 per cent for the “A” segment (Catalonians with family language Catalan who follow news through regional media).

Taking this together, each of these evolving profiles has helped to define, with consistency, the nature of unionist and secessionist citizenship in Catalonia over the past decade.
Solid secessionists make up approximately 23 per cent of the population, and the bulk is made up of a population with family language Catalan who prefer to follow the news and political debate through the regional public media (TV3 and CatRadio). Solid unionists reach 43 per cent and are citizens with Spanish as family-mother tongue who follow the news and political debates in the Spain-wide media outlets. There is a considerable cohort of 14 per cent that is made up of Catalans of origin and language, who prefer the Spain-wide media and 12 per cent of Spanish-speaking citizens, who prefer the regional media. Taken together, this 26 per cent could opt for one side or the other when it comes to secession, depending on a range of factors and the political context, and the current support for secession in this cohort stands at around 50 per cent.

That is to say, it can be estimated that there are some 64-68 per cent of CatSpanish citizenry in Catalonia in total. A third of them have serious doubts, however, regarding the merits of secession.

In front of them, there are 23-27 per cent of irreducible Catalonians who are allergic to any attempt at rapprochement with Spain. Consequently, the sustained tension between supporters and opponents of secession is always there more or less entrenched (see Figure 3). This leaves between 5-10 per cent who are ‘floating voters’ or are totally uninterested in the debate.
Privileged rebels: Economic and well-being differences behind the secessionist push

The relevance of basic socioeconomic factors on preferences for secession had been highlighted by Llaneras using data from CEO surveys during the crucial months of Autumn 2017 around the time of the latest illegal self-determination referendum. Secession appealed mostly to native Catalans, and was highest among citizens born in Catalonia and with at least one Catalan-born parent, with a maximum (75 per cent) for those with long native ascendancy. Among citizens coming from abroad or from other Spanish regions, and those born within the region from migrant parents, secession was not attractive at all (CEO Barometer July 2017). The divide depended also on income, as citizens with higher incomes and those who responded “we live comfortably” were the ones most positively disposed towards secession. Meanwhile, most people with the lowest salaries and those disclosing “many economic difficulties” were predominately against secession. Maza et al’s multivariate analysis of voting behaviour at the last regional elections (21 December 2017), fully confirmed the priority of those with ascendancy origins to explain the results, while diminishing the relevance of economic factors (see also results: 9, 26, 94). Moreover, using CEO surveys at 2011-2013 period, Boylan had already shown that national identity feelings (i.e. being a native or an assimilated Catalan) was a much stronger predictor of the desire for secession, than grievances resulting from perceived unfair fiscal treatment or other economic and political factors.

Reflecting household net income levels among citizens with family/mother language Catalan and those with family/mother language Spanish, Figure 14 displays estimations of the median household net incomes for each linguistic segment throughout the period 2006–2020. Citizens with family language Catalan exhibited higher household incomes throughout the period compared with citizens with family language Spanish. The trend line suggests that the economic crisis increased the magnitude of this inequality.
Observe the differences between these groups and how they increase throughout the economic crisis. Primary source: CEO Barometers 2006–2020. FML: Family/mother language (FML Spanish: 56 per cent of the Catalanian citizenry; FML Catalan: 36 per cent; FML both Catalan and Spanish 6 per cent; Source: EULP2018-Enquesta Usos lingüístics de la població, Institut Estadístic Catalunya; (https:// www.idescat.cat/pub/?id=eulp).

The evolution of incomes shows that the most intense effects of the economic crisis, during the period 2010 to 2018, were delayed as was the case in the rest of Spain, while family language Catalan households had already fully recovered by 2017.

Figure 15 displays the combination of the binary variable “household net income </=<3000€/month” with the two “family/mother language” segments showing their covariation with support for secession in a hypothetical referendum. Results depict a very strong effect, again, of family language, with Catalan-speaking homes being predominantly secessionist while Spanish-speaking households were more predominately unionist. Income levels also had a minor effect on the probability of support for secession, as wealthier households reported higher support for secession in both the family language segments. The difference was even clearer within the Spanish-speaking group, even though it started from an extremely low level of support for secession. That is, the economically well-situated also predominate among those few Spanish-speaking secessionist households.
Figure 15: Covariation of household net incomes and family/mother language on support of secession.

Source: Elaborated from CEO Barometers survey microdata. In addition to the effects of family/mother language, observe the distinctive effect of incomes levels within groups, especially within Spanish-speaking households. Also, attached to each label, there is the population percentage for each group from the March 2020 survey. FML: Family-Mother Language. 1M = one thousand euros/month.

The covariations of “Household net income </=3000€/month” and “family/mother language” with “national identity feelings” for the “only Catalan” and “as Catalan as Spanish” segments appear in Figures 16 and 17. The effects of income levels were much more modest than those obtained for following/not following regional media (see Figures 10 and 11).
Figure 16: Evolution of feelings of "only Catalan" national identity depending on family/mother language and household net income (2006-2020).

Source: Elaborated from CEO-Barometers survey microdata. Attached to each label are the population percentages for each group as of March 2020 survey. FML: Family-Mother Language. M=1000 Euros/month.

Figure 17: Evolution of feelings of "as Catalan as Spanish" national identity depending on family language and net household income (2006-2020).

Source: Elaborated from CEO-Barometer survey microdata. Attached to each label are the population percentages for each group as of March 2020 survey. FML: Family-Mother Language. M=1000 Euros/month.
Figure 18: Evolution of feelings of “only Spanish” national identity depending on family language and net household income (2006-2020).

Source: Elaborated from CEO-Barometer survey microdata. Observe the more intense oscillations within the FML Spanish segment (green). Observe also that the wealthier households that use the Spanish language reported less polarised feelings of national identity, the opposite than the equivalent Catalan language households (Figure 16). Attached to each label is the population percentages of each group in the March 2020 survey. FML: Family-Mother Language. M= 1000 Euros/month.

Finally, Figure 19 shows comparisons of support for secession among different groups obtained considering their reported economic resistance limits (in months), in case of economic breakdown. Results showed that support for secessionism increased with higher resistance limits, as people with higher financial resources were much more in favour of secession. A very similar trend appeared when the perception of the evolution of one’s own economic situation during the last year was measured. When that perception improved, support for secession was correspondingly higher. In all, these findings consistently indicate that the recent secessionist wave in Catalonia has been sustained by those segments within society that enjoy better economic resources and higher levels of well-being.
Figure 19: Support for secession and economic wellbeing.

Top: secession was much more popular among those with higher economic resistance limits (in months), in cases of economic breakdown. Bottom left: secession was also more popular among those with a good perception of the evolution of their personal economic situation at the end of 2017. Bottom: the same variable shows a bit less support for secession in spring 2020 (elaborated from CEO Barometer surveys).

Taken together, therefore, all these findings indicate, in a solid way, that the recent secessionist venture in Catalonia was encouraged and maintained by
the social segments that enjoy better economic resources and greater financial security. In other words, large well-established sectors of Catalan society have been the protagonists of this enduring and stubborn segregation movement, representing a group of ‘privileged rebels’, of sorts.

To close this longitudinal description, Figure 20 displays the evolution of an estimate of the median levels of ideological self-perception between the extreme left (1) and extreme right (7) of each citizen, on a left to right scale (1 to 7 points), in population segments FML Catalan (red) and FML Spanish (green). Note a shift to the left in both groups took place during the height of the economic crisis (2008-2012) and an abrupt growth to the right of FML Spanish-group followed in 2014, the date of the first illegal ‘self-determination referendum’ that had been sponsored by the regional government. Seemingly, the left parties played a permissive role with pro-secessionist forces leading the regional government.

Figure 20. Evolution of median estimates of ideological self-position from 1 (Extreme Left) to 7 (Extreme Right) among citizens with family/mother language Catalan vs those with family/mother language is Spanish.

Observe the differences between these groups and the clear change presented by citizens with family-mother language Spanish in 2014, when the first illegal independence referendum was organised by the regional government (CEO Barometers 2006–2020). FML: Family/mother language (FML Spanish: 56 per cent of the Catalonian citizenry; FML Catalan: 36 per cent; FML both Catalan and Spanish 6 per cent; Source: EULP2018-Enquesta Usos lingüístics de la població, Institut Estadístic Catalunya: (https://www.idescat.cat/pub/?id=eulp).
Important “breaking points”

The longitudinal plots shown at Figures 7-12 contain several hallmarks signalling important dates from the recent secessionist campaign. Two recognisable “breaking points” flag the clearest departures towards distinctive polarisation profiles among the main segments of the Catalan citizenry. The first one appeared months before the ruling of the Spanish High Court in 2010 that modified the Statute of Autonomy (Home Rule), that had been approved in 2006. A second and much more important one was the decision taken by the moderate Nationalist Party that had been leading the regional government, for decades, to adopt a secessionist agenda around Autumn 2012. The prestigious hispanist Sir John Elliot\(^3\) identified the same “breaking points” in his comparative account of the histories of Scotland and Catalonia, when he contrasted the lawful and negotiated Scottish bid for independence (preceding the independence referendum in 2014), with the unlawful and unilateral action in Catalonia (Autumn 2017).

The appearance of the first “breaking point” contradicts the usual depiction of the secessionist surge as a reaction of outrage against the “deep grievance” with the ruling of the Spanish High Court, that modified several articles of the region’s new statute of autonomy in 2006 that had been approved by a minority of citizens, specifically, on a turnout of 48.85 per cent (or 36 per cent of the population) 73.24 per cent were in favour of the new Statute, while 20.57 per cent were against. Notably though, pro-secession preferences were already on the rise within an important fraction of the citizenry months before the court’s decision. This is compatible with the proposal that the impact of the High Court decisions regarding home rule was truly influential, mainly because it was used as a political weapon to invigorate secessionist force and activism. However, much more decisive was the period in the run-up to the regional elections of 25 November 2012. In fact, these elections marked the definitive point of departure for the secessionist wave, when the Catalonian President at that time, Artur Mas, leading a moderate nationalist party, lost his majority in the autonomous parliament. From that moment onwards, any parliamentary majority depended on various secessionist forces and the regional government then gradually opted for secession from Spain as its dominant strategy.\(^7,8,3\)

Figures 6-7 illustrate how, around these elections, a segment of the citizenry (formed mainly of those with family/mother language Catalan) departed from a previous slowly rising tendency, towards an abrupt acceleration of reporting “only Catalan”, as their national identity. These percentages peaked around the first (illegal) consultation on secession (on 9 November 2014), and the growth stabilised at high levels as the struggle between the regional and Spanish central powers that persists today took form.

This population segment displayed parallel and consistent trends along several measures, including: feelings of national identity (“sense of belonging”); preferences for political links with Spain (i.e. opting for “independence”); and
feelings of support for secession in a hypothetical (and legal) self-determination referendum. Such a narrowing of national self-identification linked to preferences for secession showed mainly by this group of “Catalan-natives”, was not mirrored in the other big segments of the Catalonian citizenry (i.e. those with either Spanish or both Catalan and Spanish as their family/mother language). These segments tended to maintain a remarkable stability on their dual “CatSpanish” national identities without noticeable changes.

Partisan clashes within a divided society

The supporters of Catalan independence attempted, initially at least, to present itself as a peaceful and socially inclusive movement that wanted to reach and fulfil its ultimate political objective through unambiguously democratic means. The frequent, enormous and usually festive street demonstrations claiming the “right to vote” in a referendum on independence underscored and consolidated this perception for years. The fierce political struggle between the static Spanish powers and the much more dynamic regional administration also contributed to disseminate that view among many observers.24, 25, 30, 40, 68, 70

This changed dramatically when regional powers announced, at the start of summer 2017, that they were going to call for a binding referendum despite repeated warnings by the Spanish High Court that this would violate constitutional law. Nonetheless a referendum was planned that would be followed by segregation from Spain in the case of a simple majority victory. Nonetheless, the supporters of independence persevered (see “Situation map” depiction, p. 4), which had the effect of awakening the response of the unionist citizenry (who represent around three million people, from an electoral census (i.e. total number of eligible voters) of 5.5 million, within a population of more than 7 million). Catalan unionists had remained mostly silent and expectant throughout the secessionist surge, but during the weeks preceding the “independence declaration” (which took place on 27 October 2017), there was a marked and recorded rise in unionist activism, reflected in the enormous unionist rally that was held on 8 October in Barcelona (Figure 20) amid the escalating tensions that pervaded all scenarios.8, 36, 52, 68, 70, 88
Figure 21: Unionists (left) were able to deploy street demonstrations in downtown Barcelona that competed with the gigantic ones (right) that secessionists had repeatedly mounted.

Source: La Vanguardia, Google Images. These pictures were separated by less than a month in autumn 2017.

Such tensions have taken many forms over the last years, mainly through low-intensity street clashes and manifestations related to attempts to monopolise public places with secessionist symbols and to mount protests against the trial of rebellious leaders who were in prison or exile.\(^6\), \(^36\), \(^68\), \(^70\) The protests against the sentence of the Supreme Court that had condemned the rebel leaders in prison took on a particularly high intensity, including acts of serious vandalism, in the autumn of 2019. The riots managed to put the joint action of the Catalan and Spanish Police forces in check for two weeks and resulted in a multitude of wounded and detained people, which was in addition to serious damage that had been caused to private and public assets in various cities.\(^81\)

However, the main and unavoidable legacy of the failed secessionist attempt has been the deepening divisions within a society that had been presented, for decades, as a model of porosity and conviviality. This division runs essentially through an unsealed ethnolinguistic cleavage with accompanying economic differences which were previously attenuated through the myriad interactions that a truly open and contemporary society can offer.

There have been repeated but unsuccessful attempts to deny the conflictive division and the affective fracture within Catalonian society. These attempts have included a wide range of initiatives: from “diplomacy” actions by delegates of the regional government all over the world, to persistent media campaigns and scholarship in support of secession.\(^107\), \(^108\) The main message of these actions is that Catalonia is a multi-hybrid and encompassing society containing a rich
variety of communities with very different interests. Of course, most societies are hybrid and contain nuanced complexities, but they can still be strongly and acutely polarised around a single and important political issue, as is the case in Catalonia. 17, 61, 62

Provisional conclusions

Globally, this series of longitudinal findings has confirmed the notable polarisation that exists in Catalonia around the issue of secession that others had previously shown based on a handful of surveys and electoral results. Moreover, the findings presented here highlight the important covariations that exist between the outstanding changes to feelings of national identity throughout the secessionist push. By examining whether family/mother language was Catalan or Spanish; preference for regional or other media, and differences regarding economic and personal well-being. The scope of statistical associations deployed here are far from trivial and deserve serious attention.

Concerning the first one, before the dawn of the secessionist surge Miley had already established the existence of divergent national identities in the main segments of Catalan society that broke down along an ethnonational frontier. Departing from CIS surveys and other social data, Miley challenged the depiction of the Catalonian bid for sovereignty as a form of “civic nationalism.” He highlighted the operation of an ethnonational cleavage that distinguished between two population fractions, with “native, Catalan-speaking” citizens on one side and their Spanish-speaking neighbours with immigrant origins. “Mother tongue” had, in fact, the strongest impact upon an individual’s self-recognition as predominantly Catalan as opposed to expressing predominantly Spanish or mixed “CatSpanish” identities. In subsequent studies, he showed that there was a notorious gap between the preferences of citizens and options preferred by their representatives, as the language policy implemented by the regional powers was inconsistent with the preferences of Spanish-speaking citizens. He identified, moreover, two mechanisms that blocked their representation in the region’s institutions: first, a clear under-representation of those citizens in autonomous powers; and second, a partial assimilation of some Spanish-speaking elected politicians into the attitudes of Catalan-speaking rulers.

He concluded that the social bases of support for Catalan nationalism were “overwhelmingly ethnic” and that the separatist movement was an elite-led, “top down” project. The present series of findings offer strong support for these conclusions by showing that segmentation across the ethnonational divide was crucially linked to distinctive polarisation profiles during the whole period of the secessionist surge. Hurried attempts to disguise this reality by claiming that both the iterated discourses and political actions of all secessionist forces have always been inclusive, could not hide the strong segmentation of citizens’ preferences across the aforementioned ethno-linguistic frontier.
The divergent and increasingly polarised identities were also associated, to an important degree, with differential exposure to the media under direct or indirect control of the regional powers. Following the regional public media or not was an important mediator of the changes in feelings of national identity and of preferences for secession. The strong gaps in media following preferences (for news and political debates) based essentially on family-language divisions, surely contributed to an exaggeration of the distinctive communal attachments and frames of reference on both sides of the ethnolinguistic frontier: Catalans or CatSpanish. TV channels, newspapers and other broadcasting outlets, which are directly or indirectly under the control of the regional government, not only dominated but fully encapsulated the secessionist audiences operating only or mostly, in the Catalan language. This represents an obvious mismatch as Spanish is the language of daily use of more than half of Catalonian citizens.\textsuperscript{xxviii}

This reflects the operation of a "communication bubble" that nourished the secessionist fraction, as middle class natives and assimilated citizens who use Catalan language almost exclusively get their political opinion mainly from local media.\textsuperscript{8, 21, 24, 65, 66, 104, 105, 106} Despite unresolved discussions regarding the power of media to modify social opinion, there is widespread agreement on their important influence over segmented audiences.\textsuperscript{86, 87, 98}

Social networks have also been an important vector for the rising segmentation of attachments and affects inside the unionist and secessionist cohorts, though there is ongoing discussion about its relative relevance.\textsuperscript{86, 87, 98} A large-scale analysis provided solid evidence that during the 2017 illegal "referendum" for Catalan independence, social media bots generated and promoted violent content, aimed mainly at the secessionist population segment.\textsuperscript{102} Nearly 4 million Twitter posts, on that issue alone, generated by almost 1 million users, were monitored and analysed over two weeks around the event. The findings clearly indicate that automated social media content contributed to an exacerbation of the serious political conflict.

During deep political crises, the existence of unsealed ethnocultural cleavages is a widely known pre-requisite for the triggering of quick polarisation and partisanship alignments between and within neighboring communities.\textsuperscript{1, 32, 33, 47, 69} The divide in Catalonia has not spilled into an open violent conflict, though tensions were high especially in autumn 2017 and they still subsist, though in attenuated form, while the situation remains at a chronic standstill. All kind of frictions appear nowadays in different social scenarios and contribute to the confrontation between these two communities who had enjoyed a long tradition of tolerant and convivial coexistence. There have been worries that such a divide could lead to inter-group clashes that would carry the ingredients that appear in other societies that shelter unsealed ethno-cultural frontiers.\textsuperscript{32, 33, 38a, 47, 53, 69, 89, 99, 101} The riots and guerrilla actions following the sentences handed down by the Supreme Court in October 2019 provide an idea of what could emerge on a wider scale in the event of a sustained and unresolved conflict in the region.\textsuperscript{81, 83}
The highest achievement of the Catalan secessionist venture has been the creation of an intense devotion for the goal of attaining full sovereignty, as an independent state, to the point of carrying the traits of a collective romantic passion that engages an impressive segment of the Catalan citizenry. However, such passion hardly entices the rest of Catalan population. The in-group self-glorification ingredients conveyed by such nationalistic passion excluded, by definition, other communities within the region.\textsuperscript{19, 105, 106}

The secessionist movement has been persistently nourished by partisan autonomous powers, responding, most likely, to the tenacious litigation between various secessionist forces to lead the regional administration.\textsuperscript{8, 23} \textsuperscript{103} The series of findings presented in this chapter have unveiled important operating tracks of a top-down induced civil conflict that has left, as its main legacy, a deeply divided community within a fully open and democratic society at the heart of Europe.
Immersive education: another divisive tool

The longitudinal findings discussed so far established family/mother language - either Spanish or Catalan languages - as the essential feature that best describes the division created by the secessionist push. Such linguistic distinction was much more important than economic variations or the biased influence of partisan media controlled by the secessionist regional administration.

The amiable conviviality between the Catalan and Spanish language communities - not so distant indeed, as both languages are derived from old Latin - is an undeniable fact in all areas of daily live in the region. Easy and peaceful coexistence, however, does not erase an unavoidable form of competition as always happen with societies that have more than one official language. Political intervention into school programmes has been one of the areas of most frequent discrepancy and ceaseless discussions, especially regarding the relevance and differentiated roles that the Catalan and Spanish languages are afforded.

Education and national-identity: Catalanian “immersive schooling”

Catalan language evolved from Latin on both sides of the Eastern part of the Pyrenées, between the 10th-11th centuries. It was initially confined to the valleys across these high mountains, but from late 13th century it followed the expansion of the Aragon Kingdom southwards, along the Mediterranean coastline of the Iberian Peninsula, and going further still, even to some parts of Sardinia and Sicily. Nowadays it's commonly spoken in both Spanish and French Catalonia, in other Spanish regions such as Valencia and in the Balearic Islands, and also in Andorra (the only official language there), and in a single tiny Sardinian county. It is currently spoken by almost 10 million people, making it one of the most extended regional languages in Europe. Spanish Catalonia is the area that hosts the greatest number of this group, with around 7 million speakers.

After the formation of Spain in the 15th century, the Catalan language remained mostly a familial/domestic tongue for a number of centuries and only entered into formal education in a handful of primary schools at the end of 19th century, in the context of a “Renaixença” ( rebirth) of Catalan culture. This political and social movement successfully promoted the use of, and instruction in, Catalan language during the first half of the 20th century and, particularly, along during the life of the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939), when a wide network of Catalan schools was created across the region. After the Spanish Civil war (1936-1939), such initiatives were dismantled and all formal education was
delivered uniquely in Spanish language, until the end of the authoritarian regime that followed (1939-1975). From the second half of the sixties, however, there were efforts to reintroduce Catalan language in some primary schools and its domestic use had spread already into many professional areas. Once the military dictatorship ended (1975), Spain quickly transformed itself into an open and largely decentralised country: regions received wide capacities for self-government through specific home rule provisions and were allowed to legislate through their own regional parliaments. This opportunity was used to bring the Catalan language into a prevalent position within society.

A highly influential law issued by the Catalan regional parliament was the ‘Language Normalisation Act’ (LNA, 1983), whose main goal was to promote the use of the Catalan language in all professional and private settings. The law thus sought to provide the tools for the educational system to establish a fully bilingual society. Although schools had been teaching Catalan language as an ordinary subject since 1978, it was not recognised as a main language for education until 1983. All students, irrespective of their origin, were supposed to efficiently use both Catalan and Spanish languages at the end of their education, and the Certificate of Basic Educational Attainment could not be obtained without proving proficiency in both. The law promoted, in fact, the adoption of an ‘immersive system’ by establishing that students should not be allocated into different classes because of their distinct familial language, and that Catalan language had to be introduced with precedence as the first or the main language throughout the school curriculum, while Spanish language should follow as the second official language. The law was applicable to all education levels including pre-school, primary and secondary levels. This was consolidated in 1998 with a Language Policy Law (LPL). At universities, language use was left to the preference of lecturers and instructors, although specific plans to increase the use of Catalan language were also introduced across the higher education sector.

Like other educational reforms, the introduction of immersive bilingualism in Catalan schools was associated with other adjustments. A direct implication of the new linguistic policy was the adoption of textbooks and teaching materials written in the Catalan language. The contents of courses were also modified: Catalan culture, history and geography had to be taught, in parallel with Spanish culture. The reform did not involve, however, a replacement of the teaching staff and thousands of teachers benefited from swift training schemes in the Catalan language. Catalan language knowledge tests were introduced during the recruitment of new teachers and became compulsory in 1989xxix those who failed had to commit to becoming proficient in Catalan language within a few years of qualifying.

In 1994 the Spanish Constitutional Court acknowledged the validity of the ‘immersive model’ for primary and pre-schooling education, with Catalan as the main language of instruction, while Spanish remained compulsory but limited to language courses and a minimum number of subjects were taught.
Language use in secondary schools was less affected by changes introduced by the Language Normalisation Act, but the subsequent Language Policy Law (LPL) of 1998 established the “immersive regime” as mandatory in all non-University education, at least in public schools. LPL also implemented several changes regarding the relevance of Catalan language in the labour market. First, it established a required level of proficiency in Catalan language as a prerequisite for entering public sector employment. Second, it incentivised the use of Catalan language in private business, especially among firms who had links with the regional public sector, and service firms with a strong contact with customers.

The transition towards a school system in which Catalan was the main language did not result, apparently, in less proficiency in Spanish language, however. Centralised tests by Spanish and Catalan education authorities indicated that at the end of compulsory schooling the level of proficiency in both languages were similar, and Spanish language skills of Catalan students were not different from averages across Spain.

In a series of studies, Irma Clots-Figueras and associates presented pioneering findings that showed that the introduction of Catalan educational reforms in 1983 moved both national identity and political preferences towards higher levels of self-identification linked to nation-building goals. Using a 2001 CIS survey where a representative sample of more than 2,300 citizens from different age cohorts were interviewed, they demonstrated on the five-level scale of “feelings of belonging”, that “Catalan only” or “more Catalan than Spanish” self-identities correlated positively with the number of years of education received under the new Catalan language “immersive instruction” regime in schools (see Figures 23-24, for a summary).

A similar trend appeared when the authors considered measures of political preferences, detecting an increasing electoral support for nationalist parties and a higher approval for the right of self-determination for Catalonia (Figure 28). The influence of the new educational framework was clearly higher for those individuals whose parents were born in Catalonia, but was also noticeable for those whose parents were born outside the region.
Figure 22. Proportions of people answering that they felt “Only Catalan” (4) and “More Catalan than Spanish” (5) versus the rest (1, 2 and 3), plotted along the years that they finished education*.

Figure 22 shows that once the relevant Constitutional and home rule provisions were approved, there were six years (1978-1983) of almost perfect stability regarding national identities: they were equally distributed between preferences for either “Catalonian” or “Spanish” self-identification feelings. However, after the introduction of the educational reform of 1983 that was designed to promote a dominant role for Catalan language in schools, the lines started to diverge towards a systematic increase in “Catalonian-biased” national identity and a parallel decrease in rates of “Spanish-biased” national identity.

Figure 23 sets out these changes for the different “national identities” by illustrating the probability of variation due to the influence of such educational reform. The authors estimated that every year of exposure to the reform increased the probability of feeling “only Catalan”, “more Catalan than Spanish” or “as Catalan as Spanish” by more than 2 percentage points.
Figure 23. Change in probabilities for the five "national identity" categories, depending on the instruction intensity*.

*years of education received under the 1983 “Immersive law” promoting prominence for Catalan language at schools. Adapted with permission.
Figure 24. Change in probabilities for five “national identity” categories, depending on the instruction intensity*.

The authors introduced several internal controls to discard potential confounding effects due to certain characteristics of the cohorts, including: levels of educational attainment, provincial attachment, gender, family descent, migration, social use of language and several other factors. They also compared their data with those from another CIS 2001 survey completed, at the same time, in the Basque Country. In that Spanish region families can select whether they prefer a formal education for their children in Euskera (Basque language) or in Spanish language, as the main language of instruction, or through a mixed model. Thus, schools can use separate language regimes across the curriculum. Notably, there were no effects of the intensity of instruction (years of education received) on national identity or political preferences in the Basque country. Hence, the authors conclude that the nation-building biased/directional effects of the Catalan education system, based on a compulsory predominance of Catalan language, was probably causal, and the immersive system with Catalan as the main educational language was causing a bias towards a stronger national self-identification as Catalan-only.*

*years of education under the 1983 “Immersive law”, promoting prominence for Catalan language at schools, in different surveys: CIS 1998, 2005, 2006 and Bofill Foundation (2001-2005). Results fully confirm those depicted at Figure 22, from CIS 2001 survey. Adapted with permission.  

4a, 4b, 19a
These studies are important because they showed that an education system can have noticeable effects on feelings and perceptions relating to nation-building, by changing identities and political preferences, from very early on after being implemented. Though the effects detected between 2001-2006 were smaller than the ones described here for the period 2006-2019, the underlying tendencies were already there, as we shall see.

Gaps induced by Catalanian “Immersive education system”

Calero and Choi launched a study into the effects of immersive policies in Catalonia, focusing on the academic performance of students. They wanted to fill a curious absence of empirical evidence regarding this issue. According to them there were two reasons to explain this void: first, the lack of variation in Catalanian educational policy precluded the gathering of proper control groups to carry out robust contrasts; second, usual assessments of academic performance at the regional and national levels have limitations that hinder the analysis of the effects of different policies.

The authors used data from the 2015 wave of PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment that looks at OECD countries), which evaluated the performance of 15-year-old Catalanian students into the test administered in Catalan language, as well as the student’s abilities in reading, science and maths. The full sample involved 52 centres (including both public and “subsidised” private centers within the auspices of the regional administration), with a total of 1,769 students being evaluated. This excluded the fully private (non-subsidised) centres, because not all of them apply the immersion schooling in Catalan language. In order to ensure that the students analysed received identical treatment (i.e. language immersion throughout all years of compulsory schooling), those students who declared having arrived in Spain at 6 years of age or older were also excluded from the sample. After these two filters, the final sample totalled 1,347 students, equally divided for gender, enrolled across 44 centres.

Figure 25 and Table II depict the direct comparisons on scores of these three areas of academic performance – science, reading, maths – depending on the language usually spoken at home (i.e. family/mother language).
A quick inspection of Figure 25 suggest a strong detrimental effect on PISA scores of coming from homes where the family/mother language is not Catalan. Such diminished performance was noticeable for students from Spanish language homes and even more so for students coming from homes speaking another language (the majority, from migrant homes). The language of the PISA test (Catalan version) could partially explain these differences, but other comparisons listed in Table 3 also indicate that other factors also contribute to this. Applying multilevel regression analyses to the sample as a whole, Calero and Choi\textsuperscript{13a} were able to confirm their initial conjecture that ‘students who use Spanish language at home, being educated in an immersion regime in Catalan language, would achieve inferior performance in the competences evaluated by PISA, with respect to that of their classmates whose family language is Catalan, with independence of the rest of personal, socio-cultural and economic characteristics’. The observed contrasts fully confirm such hypothesis in the case of science and reading skills, but rejected it in math skills.

Students from homes that commonly speak Spanish got 10.85 points less at PISA assessment of scientific ability compared to students whose language at home was Catalan. The same comparison also gave 10.30 points less for reading abilities (Fig. 25). The lack of significance of the influence of family/mother language on mathematical ability can be explained by the fact that ability in maths requires a specific formalised language that presumably protected about the disadvantage of being educated and evaluated in a language that is different from the language spoken at home.

*Modified from (13a). Colours indicate Family-Mother Languages of the students tested.
Table 3*: Sciences competences (PISA) of 15 years old Catalonian students depending on family language, sex, test centre, region and socioeconomic/cultural background.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family-Mother Language</th>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>Catalan</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Diff. Cat-Spanish</th>
<th>Diff. Cat-Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>537.35</td>
<td>494.75</td>
<td>422.25</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>115.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>520.9</td>
<td>486.79</td>
<td>440.69</td>
<td>34.11</td>
<td>80.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>16.45</td>
<td>7.96</td>
<td>18.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENTER</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>528.04</td>
<td>483.22</td>
<td>427.02</td>
<td>44.82</td>
<td>101.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidized</td>
<td>534.61</td>
<td>515.33</td>
<td>495.95</td>
<td>19.28</td>
<td>38.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>-6.57</td>
<td>-32.11</td>
<td>-68.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>541.71</td>
<td>499.98</td>
<td>466.97</td>
<td>41.73</td>
<td>74.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of Catalonia</td>
<td>529.57</td>
<td>490.87</td>
<td>433.33</td>
<td>38.60</td>
<td>92.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>12.14</td>
<td>9.11</td>
<td>33.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIOECONOMIC/CULTURAL LEVEL:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33 per cent Higher</td>
<td>550.81</td>
<td>524.27</td>
<td>496.66</td>
<td>26.54</td>
<td>54.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 per cent Lower</td>
<td>490.57</td>
<td>474.83</td>
<td>414.81</td>
<td>15.74</td>
<td>75.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60.24</td>
<td>49.44</td>
<td>81.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reproduced from 13a.

When analysing the influence of many other variables on the gap between students from distinct family/mother languages, several heterogeneities appear. A summary of the relevant effects on scientific abilities are set out in Table 4. Regarding sex, such contrasts were negative only for boys, while girls were unaffected. Concerning contrasts between centres, comparisons were negative for public centres, but not for subsidised ("concerted") centers. The municipality where students were resident was also relevant: with the exception of Barcelona, in all municipalities the contrasts indicated significantly worse results for students whose family/mother language was Spanish. Finally, when distinguishing according to the level of economic and socio-cultural status (SECS), differences appeared in the upper segment, but not in the lower one.
Table 4*: Summary of coefficients from hierarchical lineal regressions on several sub-samples on Catalonia PISA-2015 test, for sciences abilities (comparisons with Family-Mother Language Catalan).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Family language Spanish</th>
<th>Family language Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No significant difference</td>
<td>No significant difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>- 15.92**</td>
<td>- 34.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public School</td>
<td>- 11.91**</td>
<td>- 27.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerted School</td>
<td>No significant difference</td>
<td>No significant difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>No significant difference</td>
<td>No significant difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of Catalonia</td>
<td>- 11.62**</td>
<td>- 33.77**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 per cent Higher SECS</td>
<td>- 22.9**</td>
<td>- 38.48**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 per cent Lower SECS</td>
<td>No significant difference</td>
<td>No significant difference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results clearly point to the existence of an equity problem, which generates “academic losers” that can derive from the policy of linguistic immersion in Catalonia. The findings indicate that the “immersion system” in schools has an undeniable problematic dimension that has not yet been sufficiently considered.

The iterated propagandistic presentation of the linguistic immersion system in Catalonia as an example of a very “successful policy”, that promotes both social cohesion and opportunities for advancement in the job market and regarding earning potential has therefore a component related mainly to political nation-building goals. This propaganda lacks robust endorsement by a large enough body of empirical evidence. The findings of Calero and Choi provide an important cautionary warning about non-trivial negative effects on the academic performance of students coming from homes where Catalan language is not the family language. It is also worth remembering that this includes the majority of households in the region.

**Citizens perception on linguistic “immersive system”, at Catalonian schools**

Garvía and Santana provided the first large-scale survey into the opinions of the Catalan citizenry regarding the “immersive regime” of language education in schools. Before this study, only a much less ambitious CIS-1998 survey had explored this issue that has so often been at the forefront of political debate. Table 5 shows that the preferred option for most respondents, at that time, was an equal treatment of both Catalan and Spanish in schools.
Table 5*: Preferences for linguistic regime in Catalan school system in 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: How do you think basic education should be conducted in Catalonia?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everything in Spanish language</td>
<td>0.8 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most in Spanish and some in Catalan</td>
<td>4 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half and half</td>
<td>50.2 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most in Catalan and some in Spanish</td>
<td>33.2 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything in Catalan language</td>
<td>9.3 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2.5 per cent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Garvía and Santana surveyed a representative sample of 2202 individuals (aged eighteen years and over) in 2016. The sample was stratified according to population size and strata in each one of the four Catalan provinces. Respondents were interviewed by phone and were selected by random digit dialling, considering the provincial distributions of age and gender. Interviewers were bilingual and interviewees could choose to answer either in Catalan or Spanish.
Upper panel: N=2,202. Figures add up to 100 per cent. The “agree+” category combines “strongly agree” and “agree”, while the “disagree” category includes “disagree” and “strongly disagree”. “Neutral” option (neither agree nor disagree), was not provided by interviewers to encourage respondents to take a position. Lower panel: N (Primary education) = 2,197; N (Secondary education) = 2,198. Figures add up to 100 per cent. (Modified from 36a)

More than twenty years after the CIS-1998 survey, the profile of results was almost identical (Figure 26): the “immersive system” is approved by 50 per cent of the citizenry, while there is another half of the population who would prefer a system that would allow parents to decide regarding school language or that
would fix two differentiated options according to family/mother language. Figure 27 shows that the opinions of the Catalan citizenry are split and polarized depending again on family/mother language, with Catalan native speakers overwhelmingly preferring the “immersive system” (73 per cent), whereas Spanish native speakers were mostly against it (63 per cent). An equivalent polarization appeared when opinions regarding the “immersive system” were combined with political preferences regarding Catalan secession from Spain (see Figure 28): those in favour of secession strongly approved of the “immersive system” (78 per cent), whereas the non-secessionists were clearly against it (74 per cent). This polarised split was moderated again when options included the views of parents or regarding the possibility of distinct educational distinctions according to family/mother languages.

Figure 27. Preferences regarding the linguistic regime in schools, by family/mother tongue: percentage of agreement.*

*Immersion N = 2.097, Free Choice N= 2.083 and Start in Mother tongue N=2.084. Percentages reporting neither agree nor disagree were: 1.8, 2.4 and 2.5, respectively; χ² = 249.2 (p<0.001), 47.5 (p<0.001) and 15.1 (p<0.001), for the three contrasts. See previous figure 26 for details on the coding of “agree+” and “disagree-” categories. Modified from 36a.
Figure 28. Preferences for linguistic regime in schools depending on preferences regarding secession. *

*Percentage of agreement (per cent disagreement: remnants up to 100) Immersion question N = 1.993; χ² = 541.7 (p<0.001); Free Choice N = 1.978; χ² = 125.0 (p<0.001). Mother language N = 1.979; χ² = 65.0 (p<0.001). Percentages for neither agree nor disagree were 1.7, 2.4 and 2.3, respectively. Modified from 36a.

When regarding the weight that English language should have in school, answers became more distributed. All groups gave some precedence to Catalan language and similar percentages were recorded for Spanish and English, although Catalan native speakers expressed a marked preference for Catalan language and placed less emphasis on English and Spanish (see Figures 26 and 29).
Figure 29. Preferences for distribution of teaching hours for Catalan, Spanish and English language courses. *

*N = 2,130 (Primary education), 2,131 (Secondary education). Percentages of teaching time preferred for each language (i.e. for each group of native speakers). “Both or other” includes Catalan and Spanish native bilinguals plus native speakers of other languages. Differences between Catalan and Spanish native speakers; and between Catalan speakers and “Both or other” were statistically significant; differences between Spanish speakers and “Both or other” were not. Modified from 36a.
Garvía and Aranda$^{56a}$ summarized these findings emphasising the following points:

1. Only half of the Catalonian citizenry support the current linguistic immersion policy, believing that “All children should have their primary education entirely in Catalan language”.

2. Support for linguistic immersion, however, is significantly stronger among the political elite, which suggests a gulf between the preferences of politicians and their constituents.

3. A similar proportion of Catalonian citizens approve of clear alternative policies that endorse individual linguistic rights.

4. When interviewees were asked to express their preferences not in terms of linguistic rights but rather in terms of the distribution of teaching hours, the average distribution preference gives less weight to the Catalan language than to the current linguistic immersion system.

5. Although there is a clear divide between native Catalan and Spanish speakers regarding their preferences regarding the linguistic regime, when these preferences are expressed quantitatively (in terms of the desired distribution of teaching hours in each language), the divide is not so deep. Both groups, it turns out, agreed to prioritise Catalan language about other languages in education.

6. Most individuals agreed that an ultimately independent Catalonia should not have Catalan language as the only official language.

7. Even the minority of Catalonians who would like Catalonia to be an independent state with Catalan language as its sole official language, would like Spanish language to have more weight in the school system than the current linguistic immersion policy dictates.

8. The demand for English, measured in terms of teaching hours, is slightly lower than that for Catalan and Spanish. This demand is lower among Catalan native speakers and Catalans with pro-secession sentiments than among Spanish native speakers and Catalonians who oppose secession.

The authors concluded by asserting that:

“Given these results, should we conclude that the divide between the two linguistic communities in Catalonia and the current political polarisation between pro- and anti-secession factions make it impossible to adapt a linguistic regime to satisfy all parties? Probably not if it is emphasised 1) that there is ground for agreement among Catalonians regarding this
contested issue – particularly when focusing on responses regarding the language distribution of teaching hours; and 2) that this common ground could be enlarged were both Catalan and Spanish political elites more willing to accept the value of multilingualism and stop using languages as political tools of competing national projects”.

This is prudent and sound advice, although it appears a bit detached given the degree of polarisation within Catalan society. In fact, educational policy has been a preferred field for partisan action. The issues that have predominated have been a biased and systematic education policy from the regional pro-secession administration against the preferences of a majority of the Catalonian citizenry and an outstanding and curious absence of action by the central Spanish administration.

In light of the findings presented in this chapter and the important cautions related to basic individual and family rights that have been discussed, it seems advisable to rethink the ways that the current linguistic policy in Catalonia is conceived of and applied.
A dangerous decade (2010-2020)

Over the past ten years, a good portion of the Catalan citizenry had the privilege of living through a sensational political adventure that could be seen as unique, in the annals of European democracies. The setting-up a popular movement of enormous force and dynamism, directed to achieve the neatly defined target of segregation from Spain, and arriving at the threshold of achieving its ultimate goal, is an indisputable achievement and a memorable milestone that will no doubt endure not only in the memories of those who contributed to this venture, but also among those who witnessed it first-hand.68

However, as this extraordinary campaign did not achieve its ultimate goal the seriousness of the secessionist challenge is now typically diminished by many analysts. The strategic skills of the secessionist leadership that led Catalan society through this unprecedent period have also been highly criticised. What’s more, several prominent secessionist leaders have also suffered exile or imprisonment.xxx

It is my considered opinion that this swift description of the panorama, now that the heat has gone from the secessionist battle is, in fact, wrong. I suspect this because the issue did not end with a flagrant defeat of the secessionists and not even with a narrow loss, but with a draw. This tie was sealed when a new autonomous government with a secessionist majority was formed in mid-2018, which has sustained the impasse and has kept the region bogged-down (politically speaking) ever since. This is not a complete fiasco, but a chronic and entrenched tie that is generating many skirmishes and much tension that fails to clear the air one way or another.

One of the most common ways to dilute the seriousness of the secessionist bid, is to endorse the "bluff conjecture" that the former regional government minister, Clara Ponsatí, made explicit from her Scottish exile. The most entertaining chronicle of this apparent bluff can be found in "57 days on Piolín", the meticulous, skeptical and affable diary that Guillem Martínez published online with commendable dedication.93 This chronicle began, in fact, with an explicit prediction of such a monumental bluff. Much later, the most celebrated defense by the attorneys of the secessionist leaders, during the trial held at the Supreme Court in Madrid throughout the first half of 2019, under the leadership of Xavier Melero on behalf of the former Minister of Interior of the regional government, Quim Forn,64 also pointed to this conjecture, forming part of a far-reaching political simulation that was accompanied by blatant actions of disobedience, all at the service of forcing an agreement with the central government.
This line of thought had, to almost everyone’s surprise, near complete success before the Supreme Court, as the magistrates unanimously assumed that the secessionist adventure was forged and developed based on a simulated assumption, in an “artifice” or a “reverie” (sic), without conclusive evidence that the secession proclamation was intended to be actually made effective, with the forced implantation of a new order to replace the old one. Nevertheless, the court severely condemned the secessionist leaders for sedition and embezzlement, and found that the venture had violated the constitution, had sanctioned the misuse of public funds, and had endangered public order.

There are many intelligent people who have bought this curious story that implies, essentially, that two million citizens (more or less), from an advanced and educated European region, were led to pursue a dream for ten long years and that they remain fully convinced that the promised paradise of an independent Catalan Republic will soon materialise. I suspect that it did not work that way, although I respect the task of contrasting and balancing evidence to elaborate a well-founded argumentation to sustain the sanctions that the Supreme Court finally dictated.

I suspect that not only because it seems rather improbable that an improvised and obvious bluff could be sustained for so long, keeping your clients firmly convinced that you are fully serious, but also because with a tight and immovable bluff you can win the hand and also the game. This applies to poker as much as it does to the political game.

Whenever there is a debate on this matter with people who have bought into this story of an obvious and easily detectable deception, it is useful to resort to stories to try to counter this vision. The first is a public and very well known one. The second is personal.

Firstly, during the tense weeks in October 2017 that culminated in the official (but failed) proclamation of independence for Catalonia, at the autonomous parliament, the bank branches of villages situated in the vicinity of the dividing line between Catalonia and neighboring Spanish regions including Aragon and Valencia, had to set up afternoon and weekend office hours, to cater for the large influx of Catalan customers eager to open accounts and carry out urgent deposit transfers. Images of those long lines appeared, for several days, on television newscasts from Fraga, Vinarós, Binéfar, Calaceite, Benicarló, Benabarre and other places. The press provided coverage of citizens trying to transfer deposits to accounts in Valencia, Madrid, Zaragoza, Castellón, Almería, Jaén, Badajoz and other Spanish cities, as well as trying to make requests to transfer capital to financial entities outside Catalonia. According to the Central Bank of Spain this leakage of personal deposits from Catalonia amounted to a total of more than 31.4 billion Euros.\(^\text{xxx}\) Notably, this figure is quite close to what the rescue of the Spanish banks ended up costing during the financial crash (2008-2012).

This rush to find a safe haven for private money marries very little, I presume, with the perception of a simulation pushed to the limit by means of an “obvious bluff”, with the mere objective of ending up negotiating an arrangement with the Spanish government. It must be stated, however, that I’ve found people who are still convinced that it was a bluff, but who moved their money quickly and put it safely, outside of Catalonia, “just in case”. If nothing else, this is an example of the typical distance between what is said and what is done that makes human behavior so interesting.

The second anecdote is personal.

... “I spent the sacrosanct day of the “independence referendum” of 1 October 2017 at Solsona, in my family home: a traditionalist and ultra-catholic Catalonia county and one of the iron-clad nuclei of secessionism. I devoted the weekend to staying with my father, in the shifts organised with my brothers, to visit him regularly in his last years as an old and frail senior. Before dawn, from the very early hours of the morning on that Sunday there was a continuous movement of people and vehicles that managed to wake me up. Shortly after nine o’clock a.m., we drove up to the voting point: grandpa was excited to cast his vote. I could not access the brand-new “Multipurpose Room” (for concerts, conferences and social events) that usually functions as the local polling station: all access points were blocked by huge tractors and excavating machines. I got out of the car to enquire with a young man who I could identify as a volunteer. I told him that I needed to get closer as my father was using a wheelchair. He told me to come back after a while because “the computer system had crashed and you won’t be able to vote.”

We went for a drive through the nearby hills and plains to contemplate, from the vehicle, the autumn forests and the elegantly cultivated fields ready for planting that were opening up through the low clouds. We returned to the polling station after about an hour. We ran into the same impediments again. Another young “volunteer” approached the vehicle and kindly told us that it was still not possible to vote but that he would lead us through an efficient wheelchair pass and that they had arranged a preferential row for disabled and elderly people, for when you could finally vote. He also told us that urgent information was coming to them saying that police contingents could come at any moment. I asked grandpa if he wanted to stay in those conditions. Without hesitating for even a second, he replied that better we were going to return to our trip by car. We did this until one o’clock in the afternoon, when it was time to go to his residence for lunch. During the pleasant drive we stopped at several “rectories”: tiny municipal centers with a church, two or three cottages and a sports center, which function as a social club for the farmhouses scattered around and that housed the polling station that day. The same picture awaited us, with huge tractors protecting and blinding access to the polling place. The Police did not come that day
in Solsonés, the largest and least populated Catalonian county. It would have taken heavy material and enormous force to overcome the barriers that protected the "right to participate in an illegal vote", in that county at least. Here and there, we merely saw a squad car of the Catalonian police, dubbed the "Mossos", with the occupants chatting placidly as the crucial day passed” ….

Such sensational logistics and "defensive" displays do not tally easily with the notion of a political challenge based on an obvious "bluff" enacted to sustain only a "simulation", "reverie" or "artifice". In fact, I harbor the suspicion that the magistrates of the Spanish Supreme Court got a major surprise when verifying the degree of violence unleashed by their sentence to the secessionist leaders on October 2019, a sentence which was written with an undeniable touch of interpretive creativity.

The center of Barcelona and other Catalan cities became, for ten long days, a battlefield with display of destruction and vandalism rarely seen before. A violence that reached the point of requiring – for the first time in years – the coordinated action of the regional police, the state police and the national guard, to be able to contain it. This reflected a battle that took place across the whole region that became a cover story for days in media outlets across the world, as did the subsequent repair works for the destruction of infrastructure on roads, railways, streets and also private properties that amounted to an enormous cost. It’s also worth remembering that when the Spanish prime minister visited wounded agents in hospital in Barcelona, he was heavily surrounded by security guards armed conspicuously with automatic weapons. Rather little of all this seems based on a mere "artifice" or "simulation".

xxxii. Tobeña A (2020) Catañoles: Barcelona: Ed Libros (pp. 135-136)
**CatSpanish melancholy: temptative prescriptions**

The helplessness and melancholy of the CatSpanish citizenry resurface, without remedy, when verifying the inconsistency and weakness of Spain’s response to the crisis. The draw resulting from the secessionist push was due, in the first instance, to the sober stamina showed by the unionist segment of Catalonians across a decade of sustained pressure, and a campaign of social intimidation that was designed to break any bond or link with the reviled Spanish nation. During that time, only limited meaningful support was received from Spain, without the existence of any sense of solidarity based on a shared will to embark upon a profitable navigation together, within the complex global panorama, and based on an indisputable democratic solidity, and without the confidence sustained by the capacity to create attractive scenarios of shared progress for the whole country.

This lack of self-esteem and security on the part of contemporary Spain is detectable in many areas. The astonishing facility to lose track of “the narrative” and “the story” during practically the entire secessionist crisis, in many of the most prominent forums of the world, openly betrays this. Diplomats and members of the Spanish intelligentsia rarely succeed in using the tone to show the required consistency from an important pillar of a united Europe. Spain engages in endless domestic battles, inflamed and obfuscated by the noise of minor internal discrepancies, and tends to neglect the flanks of external pressure and influence. That is an ancient vice, although almost fifty years of uninterrupted democratic conviviality and sensational economic and social progress should have been enough to correct the old propensities for bitterness and sectarian factionalism.

There will always be domestic litigations, of course. The way out lies in not turning them into a reason for unending obsession or paralysing self-absorption. A survey carried out by CEO, the official Catalan Surveys Agency, throughout all of Spain, involving in-person interviews that reached 3,600 citizens from all Spanish autonomous communities at the end of 2019, illustrated the vast panorama of discrepancies that exist about what is usually called the “territorial debate”. See, as an example, the differences that appear in Figure 30.
Figure 30. Responses to the question “What region do you think is the more privileged by the central State?”. *

* The percentages which appear inside these region’s maps indicate the total scores obtained for being perceived as a privileged community. Above: opinions of Catalan citizenry. Below: opinions of the rest of Spanish citizens surveyed. The scale of green intensities goes from “less privileged” to “more privileged”. Source: http://ceo.gencat.cat/ca/estudis/registre-estudis-dopinio/estudis-de-la-generalitat/detall/index.html?id=7368

There is a notable radical discordance here, as the Catalonians that were surveyed think that Madrid, Andalusia, Extremadura and the Basque Country receive an excess of good treatment from the central government, in that order. The rest of the Spanish citizenry believe that those who receive privileged
treatment are Catalonia, the Basque Country and Madrid, also in that order. With such different perceptions and views there is an unending breeding ground for chronic disagreements.

In this survey, respondents were also asked to indicate the degree of sympathy they felt for their fellow co-nationals from other regions. They had to answer to what extent they liked the individuals of the different autonomous communities, on a scale of zero to ten, where zero was equivalent to "I really dislike them" to ten "I like them very well". When Catalonians were asked to what extent they sympathize with fellow citizens from the rest of Spain, the average score they gave them was 6.8. In contrast, the score of these fellow citizens for Catalonians was 5.6. This expression of relatively less sympathy for Catalonians appeared in all Spanish regions, without exception. This has been the case for decades, when such surveys are carried out by the CIS- the official Spanish statistical agency-CIS, as Catalonians always sit in last place at the gradations of sympathy among the rest of the Spanish citizenry.

If instead of total average scores, other kind of proportions are used, such as 'what percentage of Catalanians do Spaniards dislike?', and 'what percentage of Spaniards do Catalanians dislike?' (with a score of four or less considered to denote 'dislike'), Catalanians are not appreciated by a considerable proportion of their fellow Spaniards. Overall, the bulk of Spaniards who show dislike for Catalanians is 26.1 per cent. In Castilia, Cantabria and Asturias, this rejection reaches one third of the population. In the Basque Country it drops to only 9 per cent. The total percentage of Catalanians who dislike Spaniards is low, at 10.2 per cent. This antipathy is higher, however, in the case of Madrid: 19 per cent of Catalanians express displeasure towards them, although Madrid citizens manifest even greater antipathy towards Catalanians, reaching 28 per cent. When the measure is taken to the extreme of antipathy or aversion: 'I really dislike Catalanians' (a zero, on the scale zero to ten), a similar differential pattern emerges: 9.6 per cent of Spaniards express that degree of notorious aversion for Catalanians, while only 1.3 per cent of Catalanians say they feel the same about Spaniards.7

Overall, therefore, the majority of Catalanians feel some sympathy for Spaniards and the majority of Spaniards also express it for Catalanians, because the average scores exceed 5. It is, however, a very tiny sympathetic score, but it allows respondents to appear as a "good guy" before the pollsters, which seems to be the majority feeling. But 26.1 per cent of Spaniards have no problem at all confessing a clear dislike for Catalanians (less than four on the zero to ten scale). And the same happens to 10.2 per cent of Catalanians when it comes to Spaniards. With the accentuated antipathy criterion, there are 9.6 per cent of Spaniards who feel aversion for Catalanians (zero, on the zero to ten scale), although only 1.3 per cent of Catalanians profess to have that same feeling of aversion towards Spaniards.
These figures must be taken with a degree of skepticism, however, because the bulk of surveyed citizens only reached acceptable numbers in Catalonia, Madrid and Valencia. In the rest of regions, the number of surveys collected was too small to draw meaningful conclusions. In any case, a clear finding is that Catalonians are situated in last place in terms of the levels of inter-regional sympathy throughout the rest of Spain. Because it is one more ingredient to add to the cocktail that nourishes CatSpanish melancholy. It seems that the splendid Spanish high speed train network, the INSERSO travel campaigns (promoting cheap holidays for Spanish Seniors everywhere), the Catalan rumba and other types of musical fusion, the region’s avant-garde gastronomy, including the adoption of Catalonian “tomato bread” by many Spanish restaurants, and the global influence of the region’s football teams, have contributed very little, apparently, to banish or mitigate old apprehensions.

However, there remains precious and still relatively unexplored opportunities for a possible prescription for an “affective” approach to these relationships, which has been often pointed out: a prominent Catalan figure is needed at the top of the Spanish government. In the five decades of a very fruitful and convivial democratic Spain, since the end of the last dictatorship, there has been not a single Catalan politician commanding the whole country, with only Andalusians, Galicians and Castilians taking the top job, with Madrid, more recently monopolising the top podium. There have been figures of great relevance and influence (e.g. Narcís Serra, Ernest Lluch, Josep Piqué, and Josep Borrell, among others), but none in the prime minister’s office. A strong Catalan leadership figure could be in order now, and it should be an individual coming with a dual CatSpanish identity.

Albert Rivera had this opportunity within his reach, but he blatantly failed. Inés Arrimadas may face the same fate, as she has only had the chance to lead during an almost total collapse of liberal centrism in Spain. So, a potential CatSpanish figure for Moncloa Palace will have to spring from the rich variety of mixed sensitivities that grow, incessantly, in the favorable climate of the bourgeois neighborhoods of downtown Barcelona or from elsewhere in the CatSpanish territories. Combining a leadership of this nature with renewed constitutional rules for Spain based on some form of creative federalism, so as to facilitate the multiple set of non-exclusive patriotism which are now fashionable among political scientist, perhaps will provide a viable plan for another thirty or forty years of convivial tranquility across Spain. It may be that, after all, what Spain really needs is a whole century of progress and amiable coexistence, without major interruptions.

With Catalonia’s irreducible secessionists there is no other way than to carry on with them with patience and temperance. These fundamentalists are, of course, another inexhaustible source of melancholy for CatSpanish citizens, because there are many of them, numbering between 20 per cent and 25 per cent of Catalonia’s population and they are present in all places, professions and trades. But there is no other formula than stoic patience and vigilant care
to deny them exclusive access to the levers of power in the autonomous region, where they easily run wild. It can be said that they are people who prefer, in all circumstances, "a tiny house" (i.e. their region) to a "spacious, open and well- aired home" (i.e. the whole of Spain). When they are reminded that perhaps they were the first to be dubbed "Spaniards" by their Occitan and Provençal relatives, with that word ("Español") utterly foreign to the Castilian language, to designate their trans-Pyrenean comrades, they do not flinch.

But Catalonian citizens and the rest of the Spanish citizenry have already traveled many centuries together. There is no reason to think that the journey cannot continue on a fruitful course. This itinerary has presented difficulties, obstacles and pitfalls most certainly, but also many reasons for hope and optimism for the citizenry and for the generations to come.
Epilogue and postscript

“We are trilinguals: we speak Spanish, CatSpanish and only a few, Catalan language”

- Quim Monzó, La Vanguardia-Cultura, 3-6-2018

Before closing this journey through politically fragmented Catalonia, it is necessary to detail why I have baptised the majority cohort of the region’s citizenry with the mixed contraction “CatSpanish”. I have tried to promote this hybrid label for 65 per cent of Catalonian citizens who self-identify, either privately or openly, and to a greater or lesser degree, with at least some elements of the Spanish character, traditions and culture. I do not pretend to replace the traditional name for the Catalonian citizenry (i.e. “Catalans”), of course, but only add another label to describe a substantial part of the citizens living in the north-eastern corner of the Iberian peninsula, with the rather naive pretension that it might acquire, perhaps, a positive connotation. In any event, I have used it as a convenient tool to better disclose the masked reality of the dual national identity that can be found in the region.

Such a term as CatSpanish, which is an English version of “Catañoles” or “Catanyols” (the Spanish and Catalan words respectively) was coined decades ago, in fact, and it must be said that it was disseminated widely, partly as illustrated by a quote from one of the more popular Catalan writers (Quim Monzó) at the start of this epilogue. It is typically used to characterise a way of speaking Catalan language that carries a profuse and deep influence from Spanish language. Today, the CatSpanish (Catanyol) variant is ever-present in Catalan life, and is widely heard and used.

It is necessary to point out, nevertheless, that this venture starts with little hope. First, because within the punctilious and sensitive area of language signaling, Catanyol (CatSpanish) already carries a stigma with some contemptuous undertones, because purists always equate foreign influence to toxic contamination, at least when it comes to language. This is why they adorn this majoritarian modality of Catalan-speaking with the attributes of a vulgar and abhorrent “patois”. And secondly, because a nickname is much more likely to end up carrying a negative connotation than a positive one when there is fierce competition between neighbors’ linguistic practices, and a bulk of findings from the psychology of social prejudice points in that direction.

In any case, since a negative valence is already carried by the term “Catalan”, perhaps a viable gap opens up to devise better prospects. In this endeavor, advertising professionals should be the main guides. Imagine the following “experiment” of social influence: if one of the world’s leading footwear brands were to name one of its coolest models “catañolas”, recognizing the inspiration derived from local espadrilles – a light shoe with a rich and well-documented...
tradition in Catalonia, the latent tension in the region could be at least partly resolved. Little more would be needed, I would argue. The ingredients of pride and prestige of wearing a pair of "catañolas" would be transferred to the word, and from the word, most likely, to the social identifier. This could be a path to achieve the goal that a coalesced signal – an idiomatic hybrid beacon of sorts – could be adopted, as a prestigious "brand" by people around the world. In other words, this could transmute the "CatSpanish" marker into something equivalent to "African-American" or "Asian-American" in the USA, to successfully overcome the degrading ethnicist or racist overtones of previous idiomatic markers.85

That is why I deviated during some passages of this essay towards gossip regarding political and other "celebrities" from a variety of backgrounds. While the subject has led us through complex and detailed analysis of statistics to describe the various features of this tense confrontation, I have tried to maintain a somewhat casual tone throughout to enable an informal tone and discussion. In daily discussions, to count on a widely accepted epithet with an affable connotation would serve the region well, presumably, because there are already so many negative and derogatory names. It could even happen that the pathways for a resolution to the current Catalonian crises, within a renovated Spanish political context, would need to be sustained by the firm support of a majority of the CatSpanish citizenry.

I suspect, moreover, that progress at the formal "negotiation tables" that Gabriel Rufián – as representative of the leading secessionist ERC party – imposed on the ruling PSOE, to try to find a way to get past the entrenched Catalanian litigation, will require the consent of the CatSpanish world. Without that, it will be difficult or impossible for any proposal that emerges to move beyond the stage of ephemeral or empty gestures. A first official meeting of which was held at the Moncloa Palace, Madrid, on 26 February 2020, convened by both the central and regional governments but served only to establish a possible calendar of future meetings and to provide a media photo-opp. As a prelude to this gathering, a range of top ministers from Madrid, Andalusia and the Canary Islands were seated in front of the usual secessionist spokespersons. A prominent CatSpanish representative, Salvador Illa, Minister of Health of the central government, a seasoned social democrat without a clear alignment on the issue of secession, was also present.xxxiv But CatSpanish unionists were absent and, apparently, they were not even expected to attend. In short, this was a bad start. Anyone who watches Catalan politics would be unsurprised at such antics, which might have partly been intended to keep the public entertained while also maintaining at least a semblance of ongoing dialogue. In any event, if any approach would allow us to advance on the path towards convivial harmony in Catalonia, they would be very welcome.

In any case, despite the typical volatility and emotive nature of much of what I have discussed throughout this journey, this essay has sought to provide a useful and rigorous account of the many essential features of the politically divided and socially fractured region of Catalonia.
Postscript

This essay was almost ready for print when the outbreak of coronavirus stopped life across most of the world, when even the Catalan secession litigations went into an abrupt and complete halt. They disappeared from the political stage, displaced by the urgency and ferocity of the pandemic. Spain was among the worst affected countries in Europe, with some of the highest rates of infection over the first months of the outbreak. The Madrid region and Catalonia were the most badly affected areas in the country. Spain also endured one of the longest and more restrictive lockdowns in the whole continent. Main political struggles during the first months of the pandemic revolved around the management of pandemic-related issues and the subsequent economic downturn, while previous disagreements and confrontations essentially disappeared during the strange spring and summer of 2020.

It was only a transient illusion, of course, particularly on the issue of the Catalan political fracture. A CEO survey on the perceived impact of the pandemic xxxv provided a good portrait of the ongoing social division, which was carried out at the peak of the viral outbreak and reached 14,715 citizens aged 16 years and older. An overwhelming majority of supporters of the secessionist parties unconditionally approved of the regional government management of the health emergency, while similar proportions of supporters of the non-secessionist parties strongly disapproved of it. Figure 31 shows the clear division of opinion obtained by differentiating Catalan citizenship by the national identity groupings to which I have often referred throughout this essay. Those who self-identify as “only Catalan” or “more Catalan than Spanish” willfully supported the (secessionist) regional government’s measures during the health emergency, whereas those who self-identified either “As Catalan as Spanish”, “more Spanish than Catalan” or “only Spanish” strongly opposed them.

Figure 31. Perceptions about the efficacy of the Catalonian government during the Covid-19 outbreak, with respondents grouped by feelings of national identity *.


These proportions go into reverse, albeit with a slightly reduced weight, when judging the policies applied by the Spanish government during the onset of the pandemic. Hence, feelings of national identity and factionalism regarding the issue of secession were the main vectors to explain the differential alignment of the Catalan citizens when judging the performance of the regional government during the hardest part of the fight against Covid-19.*** Regarding perceptions of the central government’s policies during the crisis as it unfolded, it seems that political ideology had as much relevance as feelings of national identity did.

So, despite the difficult and paralysing months that it took to get to grips with the first wave of the catastrophic pandemic and the dire prospects of the subsequent economic crash, the deep fracture in Catalonia on the issue of secession continued alive and mostly untouched.

This is not surprising at all, since the division within the Catalan citizenry is so profound and ingrained that it has reached the point of neatly separating those affirming from those negating the existence of such a division. The
frontier separating these radically divergent opinions ran (as of late 2019) across the same breaking line of secessionists vs unionists. As Figure 32 shows, the majority of Catalonian citizens (57 per cent) acknowledged that Catalonia was divided in two halves, but such opinion was clearly concentrated among supporters of the unionist parties, while among secessionist party supporters there was a strong conviction that Catalonia remained socially and politically united.

Figure 32. Opinions regarding the Catalan division (September 2019)*.

*Question: Do you think that Catalonia is divided in two halves?. Left: Total results expressed in percentages. Right: Distribution across the main parties. PP: Popular Party (conservatives); C’s: Ciudadanos (liberals) PSC: Socialist party (social democrats); ComunsPodem (left populists); ERC: Esquerra Republicana Catalunya (center-left secessionists); JuntsCAT: Together Catalonia (center-right secessionists); CUP: PopularUnionCatalonia (extreme-left secessionists).

“No está partida en dos” (“Not divided”); “Está partida en dos” (Divided); “Entre los votantes de” (Among voters of).

Source: Metrosopia Survey “Cataluña: balance de situación”: Interviews to 1500 Catalan electors >18 years old, 10-13 Sept, 2019. www.metrosopia.org

A study from survey data, from mid-2018, distinguished the prevalent mood and emotional profiles among representative segments of the unionist and secessionist citizenry. Despite the blatantly unsuccessful climax of the recent bid for secession, at the time of that survey, secessionists felt much less tired and confused than unionists. They referred also to being much less fearful and more hopeful about the political and economic future. These distinctive feelings and disparate beliefs about future difficulties were associated with a cognitive distortion that was noticeable only among secessionists, about the real magnitude of their political force.
I do not know if this has substantially changed since the catastrophe of the pandemic, although results from Figure 31 suggests that this has probably not happened. The dividing line that separates the Catalan citizenry into two main trenches runs apparently along exactly the same frontier.

In sum, the long-lasting entrenchment between the two main segments of the Catalan citizenry (i.e. unionists and secessionists) will probably continue along similar lines due to the following reasons:

1. All surveys predict that secessionist parties will top the polls at the next regional elections (planned for 14 February 2021), with combined support above 40 per cent for the main pro-secession forces.

2. Catalan secessionist parties are currently indispensable for sustaining the fragile left-wing ruling government in Madrid, putting them in an undeniable position of power.

3. With the secessionists ruling the autonomous administration in Catalonia, which is likely to remain in place in the short-to-medium term, comes the guarantee of commanding and subsidising the main media platforms (which includes TV, radio, and newspapers) and networks that nourish something of an echo-chamber of pro-secessionist opinion.

4. It also warrants the unchanged continuation of the educational system in schools that cultivates and assures the stagnation of social strata within the Catalan citizenry.

5. The post-Brexit period raises questions about the future constitutional status of Scotland and Northern Ireland, and thus creates opportunities for secessionists to find allies in the European context.

6. Looking through a wider lens, successive regional governments have worked hard to create a network of sympathisers and supporters of the Catalan secessionist movement among international media and in many influential academic and other circles, across Europe and North America especially.

7. Although major industrial firms and financial corporations have firmly opposed secession during the high-point of the confrontation, there is also a disseminated, important and creative network of enterprises, in many areas, that actively support secession.

8. The most influential trademark of Catalonia around the whole world – Barça F.C. – has been under the heavy influence of secessionist circles (with varying intensities depending on the successive club boards), over the last 15 years. All forecasts suggest that this trend will continue unabated.
9. A good proportion of important employers, university governments, professional colleges, school boards and the boards of a range of other institutions across the arts, commerce, finance and sport are also under the influence of secessionist circles.

10. Many local celebrities from across the arts and culture, as well as within leading sports and leisure activities, are also under the strong influence of secessionist forces.

So all the necessary conditions for a continuation of the deep social fracture among the Catalan citizenry that I have described here remain present, despite the blatant failure of the secessionist venture. In fact, the subsequent imprisonment and exile of prominent secessionist leaders, and the trials and sentences by the Supreme Spanish Court that followed, were effectively used, with plenty of half-truths and obvious falsehoods, as propaganda to sustain the fervour and commitment within the secessionist movement.

The unionist field returned, for its part, to the sober and mostly subdued resistance that has characterised it over more than the past decade. In reality, the unionist side can anticipate a further extended period of stoic resistance, while awaiting the intervention of a reinvigorated central government, which at the time of writing continues to feel like a rather distant prospect.

_Sant Cugat del Vallès (Barcelona), Spain, October 2020_
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The Catalonian secessionist crisis was the most noticeable event that Spain offered to Western politics in the opening decades of this century. Within this time – characterised as it is by huge technological acceleration, myriad online and trade interactions across multiple levels, high levels of political polarisation, and widespread feelings of collective unease and discontent – the Catalonian secessionist movement has become one of the prevalent topics of public policy and political debate in the European Union.

The Catalonian matter is often reduced to a narrative that Catalonian citizens – typically dynamic, engaging and with the wonderful city of Barcelona as their capital – are not at ease with life within Spain and would like to rule their society and to organise their lives themselves. Meanwhile, the central authority in Spain resists any demand for attaining sovereignty. This antagonism has poisoned the relations between regional and central authorities and the conviviality among many Catalonian citizens.

This paper explores the existence of other Catalonian citizens who do not usually appear in tellings of this often truncated and over-simplified story. There is great diversity within this group, CatSpanish, a citizenry which recognises and declares a double national identity – both Catalonian and Spanish, to varying degrees for each person – in terms of feelings of belonging.