

# The voice of society in the face of the crisis

Víctor Pérez-Díaz



FUNCAS Social and Economic Studies, 3





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## **I. THE VOICE OF THE AUDIENCE IN PUBLIC SPACE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES, AND SOME METHODOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS**



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## 1. General orientation

The year that symbolically marks the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the new millennium is 1989. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the Soviet Union it appeared as if we had said goodbye to the confrontation between a free order and a dystopian, totalitarian one, so-called real socialism. Others, such as fascism, had disappeared one or two generations before. For some, the triumph of the free world augured an end to history, but in reality, what it brought was the start of a new phase in history. The existence of very different forms of that triumphant order along with variants of what remained of its adversary has led to an unstable *modus vivendi*. At times, what has resulted has been referred to as a “new normality”, which could be Orwellian newspeak to refer to a “new disorder”, characterized by an ever higher degree of uncertainty. It is this situation that has now placed history and the capacity of human agency to guide it, at the center of attention, public debate and politics.

This study has been written under the impact of this resulting sensation of uncertainty, and is influenced by two key ideas. The first is the attribution of a limited but central importance to human agency, in contrast to the (frequent) overestimation of structure. The second is the attribution of an also central importance to the totality of human agents, to the *voice of society*, to the common people, in contrast to the (habitual) overestimation of the centrality of elites and counter-elites.

History, this intertwining of agency and structure, is like an open drama, in which the actors continually abandon the script, and in which the audience constantly interrupts and alters the function. Public debate can be understood as such a representation: As a group of actors, in particular, the political class, acting on a stage and in front of an audience. The *performance* of the actors contains cognitive, moral and emotional dimensions, and, attentive to this, the orator of the moment attempts to obtain the support of the audience. But the

audience is active<sup>1</sup> and does not limit itself to applauding or booing the actors. It speaks and acts on its own; it intervenes in the drama. Between both actors and audience a succession of experiences are constructed, at times positive or acceptable (although at times such experiences may seem monotonous), at times disturbing and even terrible, although we learn from all of them.<sup>2</sup>

Today, debate seems to be dominated by a generalized sensation of global crisis, affecting not only the economy and politics, but society and culture as well. In reality, the current restlessness that characterizes society has existed since well before 1989 but is now becoming increasingly palpable.<sup>3</sup> We must return to the end of the 1960s and to the decade of the 1970s to detect a change in epoch, and what some sociologists consider a transition from a world dominated by processes of morphostasis, which assure continuity in the fundamental aspects of the structure and culture of a society, to one characterized by morphogenetic processes, through which society enters into a path of continuous generation and regeneration of new forms of organization and orientation in the world: A path of deep discontinuities (Archer, 2007). Thus, there has been a transition from morphostasis to morphogenesis, which places the focus on the issue of the strategic capacity of human agency to orient itself in a context of growing uncertainty and complexity. This capacity, in turn, in my judgment, depends on the degree of reflexivity and relationality and the quality of the social relations of the agency in question, as well as the civic impulse that emerges from the connection between these two dimensions. Reflexivity, relationality and civic impulse thus define the capacity of agency to grow or improve in situations of disorder. I refer to reflexivity therefore as the exercise of agents' mental capacity in considering their relationship with their social context and vice versa (the social context in its relationship with them). I insist on the limits of that reflexivity and on the limited coherence, fuzziness, ambivalence of the agents. Relationality (Donati, 2011) assigns to the system of social relations (and relations

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<sup>1</sup> And with its mere presence already influences the orator (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971). The present study has benefitted from discussion within Analistas Socio-Políticos and from the collaboration of Juan Carlos Rodríguez.

<sup>2</sup> See the reference to a variant of these terrible but educational experiences, the recalcitrant experiences of totalitarianisms, in section VII.

<sup>3</sup> One or two decades before this date the West experienced the development of two complementary cultural and political movements. On the one hand, the defense of a free order in the face of totalitarianism. On the other hand, a series of issues placing that order into question, which merged although they began from such distinct imaginaries and experiences (although connected) as the tension generated by the Vietnam War and a diffuse but ostensible uneasiness among important segments of generations of young middle-class people, who half incarnated and half simulated a desire for rupture. The spring of 1968 would witness the unfolding of both drives, toward a rupture with totalitarianism and toward the questioning of the free order in its habitual version, in European capitals not too distant from each other, Prague and Paris.

of relations) in which agents are involved, with special attention to relations of reciprocity and in reference to common goods.<sup>4</sup>

For the moment, if we observe the current situation and public debate, both liberal democracy and the market economy seem to be greatly impacted by the current crisis, although depending on the country, in different ways and to different degrees. The prospects for globalization and technological changes; the expectation of (perhaps) slow growth and growing inequality; the increasing disaffection from politics and the political class among wide layers of society, with its reflection in a growing populism; migratory flows; terrorism; the contrast between the exponentially growing volume of information and the sensation that, at the same time, “noise” and uncertainty are also growing: All are converging in the perception of this moment as one of deep, prolonged crisis that may even worsen. This serves as the background for the decisions being made in different spheres, for example, in politics and in the economy of each country. I am referring to the decisions that specifically correspond to the situation of crisis, which is, by definition, a time for crucial decisions (Koselleck, 1988), in which the capacity of the agency in question to interpret the problem, choose one solution over another, and carry it out effectively, is in play. This capacity is limited, of course, but it can still leave a deep mark in the process taking place.

In this text I explore this important issue: The strategic capacity of human agency in times of uncertainty and growing complexity. I do so by presenting and analyzing the empirical findings from an opinion survey;<sup>5</sup> and I develop an argument about a given collective agent, the Spanish citizenry in a specific moment in time. This is the voice of the audience,<sup>6</sup> faced with this open drama.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The reflexivity that we address in this case, referring to the citizenry/audience in situation of crisis, combines the modes of autonomous flexibility, the communicative and what Archer (2007 and 2010) calls meta-reflexivity, trying to avoid fractured reflexivity (which could provoke crisis itself). The combination of both problematics (reflexivity and relationality) comes to be one step more in the development of the issue of the intensity of agency (Pérez-Díaz, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> This survey (ASP 16.059) was designed by the author under the aegis of Analistas Socio-Políticos, Research Center, with a sample size of 1,210 respondents, field work carried out in May 2016, details of which can be found in the appendix to this study.

<sup>6</sup> The voice of the audience, or if it is preferred, of society, the citizenry, the average citizen, the people, ordinary people: Many other forms, more or less colloquial or of common academic usage, to refer to a substantial majority of the society in question.

<sup>7</sup> This study is part of a research program carried out over the last eight years on the management of the economic crisis, in terms of public policies, adjustments and maladjustments in the framework of labour relations, and other related issues, always from a comparative perspective, and focusing attention on public debate, the strategies of actors and the European framework. The first studies (Pérez-Díaz and Rodríguez, 2010; and Pérez-Díaz, Mezo and Rodríguez, 2012) were based on three surveys carried out in 2009, 2010 and 2011, which will serve as a reference for understanding the results of the 2016 survey. The rest of the studies within that program are: Pérez-Díaz, Rodríguez and Chuliá (2013); Pérez-Díaz and Rodríguez (2014); Pérez-Díaz, Rodríguez, López-Novó and Chuliá (2015); and Pérez-Díaz, Rodríguez and Chuliá (2016).

What I will do can be summarized as the analysis of the messages (generally reasonable and coherent, and not those of a confused society that has lost its way) that citizens send to politicians regarding the content and form of policies (essentially moderation in content and civil forms). These messages are accompanied by a certain ambivalent attitude, though not total disaffection, toward the political class. In addition, they are messages that politicians tend not to listen to if the citizens themselves (with their appreciable though limited cultural and social resources) do not trust in themselves sufficiently to articulate them and, with the corresponding civic impulse, convert their voices into continual and effective action and insist they be heard. To a certain degree, my approach is a variant of the classic Aristotelian position that assumes, in certain conditions and in certain form, the virtue of the multitude (Cammack, 2013), but I give this multitude greater protagonism. However, this is a protagonism that is impossible without a sufficient civic impulse, an impulse that goes beyond a mere capacity for adaptation.<sup>8</sup>

Said in other terms, the assumptions and primary themes that I explore, and the findings in this essay are the following. I begin from the position of taking the opinions and attitudes of the common people seriously, rejecting their reduction to a reflection or result of a disposition induced by the combined effect of, on the one hand, the position of agents in the social system *sensu lato* (including the economic structure and the political system), which would determine the structure of their opportunities; and, on the other, the dominant imaginary, which would determine the nature of their ideas and concerns.

These attitudes and opinions are very important in the current moment, with its limits. They send four main messages, which represent the main findings of the survey. First, they refer to a sense of the historic course or direction of the country. Secondly, on issues of substantive policy, they correspond to a range of positions that are consistent and coherent with the historical experience of recent generations in terms of a convergence (and debate) between the traditions of social democracy and conservative liberalism. Third, they seem to belong to a public that is very careful about and attentive to the task of recreating a political community. Fourth, they quite consistently support civil forms of doing politics. The four messages are quite clear: There is a clear direction, which translates into substantive policies and a vision of a certain political community; and civil forms guarantee communication and trust among members of that community.

Lastly, society sustains, articulates and applies these messages. In this way, it tests its strategic capacity, supported by given socio-cultural resources, which

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<sup>8</sup> An effective civic action that means a capacity to grow or improve in situations of disorder, and that can be understood in the sense of the antifragility proposed by Nassim Taleb (2012), in contrast to a mere resilience or mere capacity for adaptation.

reveal a specific form of reflexivity and the degree of quality of its relational world, whose potential and limits I explore. To do this, I address, in particular, both the character of the relationship of society with the political class and with itself, and I consider certain cultural resources (economic knowledge, historical narratives) that articulate the map of these relationships in space and time, within their global context and their past. In this way, I set out to consider the current moment as an open drama.

## 2. Laying out the issue, the evidence and the method, and developing the messages

I choose a bounded space, moment and issue to clarify the evidence and construct my argument, with the hope that it will serve as a starting point for a subsequent broader debate. The space and the moment are those of Spain today, with only some minor references to a longer comparative and historical framework;<sup>9</sup> although, obviously what is said here about Spain could in great measure apply to many other countries in Europe. In addition, the issue is bounded, given that I refer to an important though limited part of the imaginary and experience of everyday people *qua citizens*, to whom we have access through a survey.<sup>10</sup>

I adopt the perspective of an interpretive social science, in which the meaning of action for agency itself, understood in its context, has crucial importance (Gadamer, 1996; Pérez-Díaz, 1980), and in which the strength of the argument depends on the plausibility of the reconstruction of this action and of the situation to which it responds. This is a perspective attentive to the cognitive and moral potential and limits of the agents involved in the crisis. In this case, I present the voice of the audience in the form of responses to a questionnaire, weaving together the questions, the responses and my commentary.

This is a tentative reconstruction of the voice of the citizenry applying what Davidson (1974) called the “principle of charity”, understanding what is said by addressing what they want to say, its coherency and its context. The result

<sup>9</sup> Apart from the indications in the text, see the references to other data from recent decades in *Analistas Socio-Políticos* (2016).

<sup>10</sup> This leaves the path open, of course, to a broadening of the voices and the issues, and to the application of other instruments. See, for example, other uses of the data from this survey in Chuliá (2017) and Rodríguez (forthcoming). See, also, the studies gathered in Coller, Jaime and Mota, eds. (2016) about the voice of a part of the political class (with some essays, such as that by Leonardo Sánchez Ferrer, comparing the voice of parliamentarians with that of the citizenry); or those found in Tejerina and Gatti, eds. (2016), in particular that by Ramón Ramos Torre and Javier Callejo Gallego (which analyzes the voices of society based on discussion groups).



is that this voice, in this case, presents a significant degree of coherency and correspondence with the surrounding reality

Note that I am not referring to a complete coherency or correspondence. Human agents, whether elites or common people, have a limited capacity for coherence and understanding of reality. Our capacity for deliberation and dialogue with others and with ourselves is limited. We think and we act against a backdrop of a certain internal deliberation, in which we alter arguments in favor and against different positions, so that our mental processes and our actions have a dialogic character.<sup>11</sup> In addition, these are situated within a sphere of relationship with others; they are approaches and responses to the solicitations of others. This relationality (Donati 2011), carved into our experience, means that our attitudes and opinions must be considered to be inscribed in a conversation in which we are engaged with a multiplicity of actors, and which is modified in different ways with respect to the actors involved. The end result of this combination of reflexivity and relationality is a sort of changing complexity in the voice of the agent in question, in this case, the voice of the audience in public space. This voice is not only not exempt from ambiguity and ambivalence, but to a certain extent, is characterized by them. It tends to reflect not rigid, but relatively fluent positions, which incorporate different degrees of uncertainty and internal deliberation.<sup>12</sup>

My reconstruction, in its attempt to do justice to the complexity of the voice of the audience, proceeds methodologically from a survey with a questionnaire designed to permit the interviewer to *accompany* the respondents in their process of deliberation through a series of issues that constitute important milestones in their political sensibility and experiences. The questions are formulated in a manner that offers them balanced alternatives, and are organized in a sequence that reveals this deliberation. This leads to the data that is expressed through the textual extracts (here indicated in quotations and italics)<sup>13</sup> of the questions and responses, presented here along with my interpretations. Normally my commentary is very closely connected to these extracts, but occasionally I present broader speculations or interpretations, which address related issues and which I hope are an invitation and contribution to further discussion.

This reconstruction is articulated in two parts: One regarding the messages from the audience in public space (direction or course of the country, substantive

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<sup>11</sup> And in which the interior dialogue of one is linked to the interior voice of the other (Bakhtine, 1970: 284, 298).

<sup>12</sup> On the importance of the phenomenon of ambivalence see Smelser (1998) and his reading of Hirschmann (1970).

<sup>13</sup> I recognize that the combination of quotation marks and italics may seem excessive emphasis, but it reflects my intention of marking the connection and difference between the questions / responses and my commentary.

policies, political community, civil forms of politics); and the other regarding cultural factors that define the character of the audience and condition its relationship to the political class.

I follow a conceptual schema with seven steps. I begin with the perception of agency as already embedded within a world that moves within a historical period and which appears to have a course or direction. The next step is to see if this course is consistent with the *substantive public policies* aimed at managing this world, including those related to the acceptance of its institutional framework. The third step is to take a moment of reflection, asking ourselves about the identity of those who follow this course: What is *the identity of collective agency*, the political community of reference? Again, we take note of the ambiguities that can emerge in this respect. The fourth step consists in examining *the forms of relating* within this community; civil forms would make the continual re-creation of this community possible, while, on the contrary, aggressive and uncivil forms<sup>14</sup> would question or destroy it.

Three steps remain, related to the socio-cultural resources that this agency (the audience, the society) has to project its messages, and, in certain cases, to maintain or correct its course, to get its substantive policies correct, to reaffirm or clarify its identity and to be civil in its forms. These steps affect the dimensions of the relationality and reflexivity of agency and, connected to this, the scope of its civic impulse. The fifth step is focused on *the relationship of society to the political class*, and the level of trust society has toward it. The sixth is an examination of cultural resources, in the form of the knowledge and assessments that provide support to society, with specific reference to the economy and historical narrative. And the seventh is focused on the relationship of agency to itself, or the degree and form of the *trust society has in itself*.

I must add two additional observations, this time, regarding the method of exposition. The first is that, focusing on the results of the survey, and almost exclusively basing myself on it, I understand that I leave many areas unexplored. The comparison with other countries remains reduced to a general reference to the direction of the country and the tenor of its substantive policies. Although I make continual reference to data from the last decade, which permits me to situate the discussion in the short-term, and at times to data from previous decades as well, the historical context is not explicitly and systematically discussed. The second is that I focus on the overall results, that is, on what the

<sup>14</sup> On the issue of “civility” see Pérez-Díaz (2014), which distinguishes between a minimalist version of civility, as the virtue of managing political differences, and in particular, the treatment of political adversaries, perhaps with strong cultural differences between the (Hall, 2013; Smith, 2002; Douglas and Ney, 1998; and the discussion of March and Olsen about civilized conflict in democratic politics [1995: 50 and ff.]); and a broader version that also includes civic virtue, with its reference to mutuality, fraternity and the common good.

*totality* of the respondents say about the different issues, without addressing the differences among them. This task of differentiation must be addressed in what follows; all the more because one of the keys for understanding the processes of internal deliberation I refer to is found in this differentiation. It could be done by addressing the variations in opinion based on a series of variables, such as socioeconomic status, political positions, experience in associations and others, including sex and age, and regional identity.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, I think that this first overall interpretation is important and useful for initiating this path. Treating the sample in question as a totality makes sense. The overall results suggest that we are before a collective agency in which we can discern an *argument* and a *mood* that applies to the majority of its components. This is a majority with a very broad frequency, which we can refer to as society as a whole, the common people, the general citizenry. It makes a relatively coherent *argument*, sufficiently so that we can understand its general sense, including a sense of its limits. However, this is a relative coherency, which justifies my interest in emphasizing the complexity, fuzziness, ambivalence and ambiguity that also appear in the responses. Examining this complexity could be a starting point for exploring the internal conversation or deliberation of society more in-depth, which would permit us to examine the issue of its reflexivity.

With so many pending tasks, what I propose is, therefore, one step on the path, one tentative step. I emphasize this tentative character with a method of exposition in which I stress the open character of the interpretation of the data, open to a series of dramatic and continuing events. Which, as such, will continue to require from us (observers included) a combination of interpretation and explanation, prognosis and proposal, in short, a commitment (the discussion of which, though I mention it here, I largely leave for another occasion).

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<sup>15</sup> In addition, the variety of "cultural biases" (Douglas and Ney, 1998).

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## **II. MESSAGES: EMBEDDED IN A MOVING WORLD WITH A COURSE; AND THIS WORLD AND THIS COURSE ARE EUROPEAN**



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Surveys tell us, although just reading the newspaper headlines makes it clear, that for economic and other reasons, people feel themselves to be in a situation that generates unease. This is and has been the case for some years. The survey we discuss here reveals this, as do the surveys we carried out between 2009 and 2011. From the results from one of them we deduced that we were looking at a society, Spain, in a state of unrest, which we characterized in the expression “an alert and distrustful society” (Pérez-Díaz and Rodríguez, 2010).

However, then, as now, the unease could be tied to the feeling that, despite everything, there was a direction or vista. In the 2016 survey, the respondents were asked: *“Taking into account the general situation in the country, how do you think things are going in Spain? Are we moving in the right direction or are we moving down the wrong road?”* And the response seems clear, as a wide majority, more than two thirds (70.5%), believe that we are on the wrong road. Although it should be noted that the percentage that answered in this way in 2011 was somewhat higher, 79%.<sup>16</sup>

However, being on the wrong road does not mean that there is no direction, in the sense that there are no criteria for judging the road that should be followed. Strictly speaking, it is not that there is no sense of the direction or path to be followed. There is, and it is even quite clear. To understand this, it is necessary to understand the situation of the subjects in question as that of agents already embedded in a world in movement. They are inside of this world. They are, and they vaguely intuit that they are, part of a system of interrelationships that are subject to a temporal, historical process.

To begin, the pessimism of those who think that things are going poorly should be qualified by the response, also held by a majority, to the following question: *“Do you feel you belong to that part of the world that is advancing with sufficient determination; to that which is advancing, although rather slowly; to that which is stagnant; or to that which is going backwards?”* Twenty

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<sup>16</sup> Perhaps this is matched by a slight improvement in the evolution of the future prospects of Spanish households, with a certain relief from the crisis. In 2011, 17.6% of respondents expected things to improve in the next twelve months, 47.1% thought things would continue in the same manner, and 29.7% thought things would get worse. In 2016, the respective percentages were 26.2%, 53.2% and 17.3%.

one and a half percent believe that their world is clearly advancing, 31.3% that it is doing so slowly, 28.5% that it is stagnant, and 16.7% that it is going backwards. We could say that the approximate result is that respondents see their world as advancing slowly.

But a follow-up question could be: In relation to what or to whom does it advance, stagnate or go backward? And the answer that can be inferred from the responses is: In relation to Europe. Perhaps because this is the world in which we are embedded and from which we start, and from which we face the problems that produce unease and that mark our path. Europe is the world, and the model; in other words, it is our course.

What countries are models for the Spanish regarding those that are advancing and those that are going backwards? At least when we ask about "economic models" (*"What country could be a model for the Spanish economy?"*), respondents' positions are unmistakable. Apart from the 27.1% that did not answer this question, the great majority responded clearly. The models are European countries; more specifically, those of the center and north of Europe, above all, Germany (24.2%), Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark (21.1%), as well as France, Holland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (14.5%). The Spanish do not see the countries of Eastern Europe or other Mediterranean countries as models, nor those of Latin America or the United States (3.3%). And countries such as Japan or Singapore are simply too distant.

We can assume, based on these commonly accepted model countries, that in the Spanish imaginary these places are understood to be market economies open to the global market, capable of managing the current economic crisis or limiting its worst effects, and with strong welfare systems. But we must take into account that these economies cannot be separated from their social and political contexts. It is assumed that they operate within a framework of social tensions and social commitments regarding the establishment and carrying out of public policies, but that they do so in such a way that these tensions appear, not as radical conflicts that place the system into question, but as conflicts that are normal in a liberal democracy and a plural society. These countries are neighbors and familiar to the Spanish, in the sense that they belong, as does Spain, to the European family. Being a part of Europe is a fundamental factor in the context of meaning that the Spanish have in having them as models.

This interpretation seems consistent with the responses to other questions, for now, those that reflect the great importance belonging to the European Union has for Spain, as did becoming a member, and as does being involved in its institutions. Almost three quarters (72.6%) of the Spanish population believes that *"Spain should remain in the eurozone"*. But this is not expressing a

mere duty, a convenience or an interest; it is also the manifestation of a durable state of being. It is a reality of which Spain is a part.

This is a complex reality. What Europe will be one day (for example, an increasingly united Europe? and what might that mean?) we will have to wait to see. However, for now, it is a Europe of nations, and a Europe with a history, a story, that is perhaps a bit unclear in our explicit memory, but alive in innumerable “places in memory”.<sup>17</sup> It is the story of a Europe that, from time immemorial in a certain manner, has functioned as a totality of nations in rivalry and that imitate each other *ad nauseam*, and that exist in a permanent tension of each living in the shadow of the others. Europe’s nations have always been a mutual reference for each other, only now in a different manner. As if today their rivalries have been pacified (though this is not completely true) and their reciprocal imitation has grown more intense. A (provisional?) destination point has emerged from the terrible and relatively recent events, the European civil wars of the twentieth century, intertwined with totalitarian phenomena, as Europe has tried to respond definitively with the institutional frameworks that today characterize it.

Regarding more recent times, we are talking about a collective subject that has for some years now lived and is living the experience of an economic crisis and a political debate about the best way to manage that crisis and other important matters (migrations, terrorism, etc.). This process follows its course, accompanied by collective deliberation in which the positions of the public in supporting specific policies are relatively fluid and changing; which is also the case regarding questions related to the institutional architecture of the European Union.

The attitudes and opinions of the survey respondents reflect or are sensitive to this changing complexity. On the one hand, it seems that they imagine a future in which the current inertia in the division of powers between the EU and its member countries prevails. In the sense that, when asked “*what do you think will happen with the EU in the next 20 years?*”, 60.9% believe that, in terms of that division of powers between the European Union and its member states, “*the situation will be very similar to the current one*”. For their part, almost one fourth (23.8%) believe that “*European institutions will increase their powers at the cost of member states*”.

However, this sense of the stability of the institutional framework hides a more complicated judgment, as well as an important reservation with respect

<sup>17</sup> Les lieux de mémoire for Europe that can be interwoven with those of each country, are, moreover, those that stand out (Nora, ed. 1997).



to this dominant tendency. Almost half of those surveyed (46.5%) think that *"to solve the economic problems of EU countries it is better that each country regains greater control over its economic policies"*; in comparison to somewhat more than one third (36.6%) who prefer *"that the EU plays a more fundamental role in the economic policy of member states"*.

It is likely that the strength of conviction behind these responses is weak,<sup>18</sup> above all if the respondents are of the opinion that they do not know much about economics or how European authorities function. In effect, 62.7% believe that *"the level of knowledge that the Spanish have in general regarding how the Spanish economy works"* is low or very low. In addition, 73.5% confess that *"they know little or nothing about the deliberations or decisions of European leaders in institutions such as the European Council or European Commission"*.

Other data suggest only a modest familiarity with European experiences, or with that of other European countries, which could weaken the strength of their opinions on the matter in question even more. Thus, 77.7% believe that *"the level of knowledge the Spanish have in general of the history of Europe"* is low or very low. It should be remembered, however, that the country has been a relatively close witness, including through emigration and tourism, of this Europe over various decades, although only a little less than ten percent have lived in another European country for more than six months, and only one fourth say they speak another European language fluently.

Therefore, on the one hand, it seems that we are facing an existential being installed in Europe, and we assume a fundamental attachment to the idea of Europe, and a commitment to it as part of *"a natural order of things"* (Pérez-Díaz, 2012). On the other hand, perhaps there are gaps in this installation, ignorance, a touch of relative indetermination in pinning down people's opinions regarding European public policies. Perhaps there is a touch of fragility.

The ambiguity that results from this combination of a solid generic attachment and doubtful specific reasoning also appears when the capacity of Europe to respond to other challenges, such as terrorism or migratory

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<sup>18</sup> And depending on the course of the conjuncture. Along with these effects, and without going into depth on the matter, I point out some of the results of the 2011 survey. At that time, with a sense that the crisis would result in an important political change in Spain, but also after years of controversies about Europe's management of the crisis, there was among the Spanish surveyed a majority critical of the governments of European countries (61% judged them as lacking solidarity; 78.2% as not very effective in responding to the crisis; 65.8% as not very capable of coordinating) and a tendency toward supporting a European government (77% in favor) and that the EU would exercise control over national budgets (81.4%). In addition, 44.3% would accept the EU increasing its powers over member states (a percentage that declined to 23.8% in 2016).

flows, is considered. This is not a black or white alternative. The position of the respondents could depend on various factors, including the conjuncture. What is clear, is that at the time of the survey, we find, on the one hand, that almost two thirds (64.7%) think that *"European countries acting together will effectively confront the problem of jihadist or Islamic terrorism in the near future"*. While, on the other hand, the positions are more balanced in the case of refugees, almost equally divided, with 46.1% agreeing that *"in deciding on accepting refugees"* they prefer *"that each country decides on its own the number of refugees it wants to take in"* and 47.6% preferring *"the majority of EU governments deciding"* on that number.

In short, the commitment to Europe is unmistakable, and even more so when we understand that it is accompanied by support for substantive policies aimed at maintaining and strengthening a determined institutional framework, of liberal democracy, a market economy and a plural society, which are exactly the public policies of the political communities that form Europe. In this way, they are reaffirming again that they take Europe as their path or guide.



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### **III. MESSAGES OF SUPPORT FOR SUBSTANTIVE PUBLIC POLICIES FROM THE EUROPEAN POLITEIAS: RELATIVE MODERATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS**



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I suggested before that a certain degree of ambiguity exists, that is, a limited contradiction, in the perception society has of the current situation. This ambiguity is indicated, first, by the fact that while the situation is perceived as worrying, there is the relative confidence that it is susceptible to response because "there is a course", and even more so, because this course has a name, and that its name is Europe. This suggests that Spain is a country that is or is trying to be some type of variant of European model countries. Secondly, as the current conjuncture is one of changing complexity, survey respondents, attempting to be realists, qualify their support for different aspects of European policies, and for different possibilities regarding the division of powers in the EU and among member countries.

However, in the end, this ambiguity does not place into question the importance of the fundamental commitment of Spanish society for a Europe that sets the course being followed; and this commitment clearly reveals a preference for a type of social and economic system that is precisely what the political system guarantees. The more so as these are isomorphic systems, therefore the frameworks of the social relations of these systems are all quite similar: All advocate, at least as an ideal reference, for an order of individual liberty, a free order, in which the relationships between agents are between free agents. Support for Europe is support, therefore, for these types of systems and this order.

If we follow what respondents say regarding what to do about the economy and society, about economic and social policy, we find the following: For the moment, support for a market economy, or, in other words, for capitalism. However, we again encounter a degree of ambiguity, of reservations, details and nuances. These are crucial, in particular in a moment in which the apparent need, due to the crisis, to make corrections or adjustments to capitalism is intensely debated, although such corrections, have in fact, been continual throughout capitalism's history.

*Grosso modo*, the vision of capitalism, or the market economy, seems clearly positive.<sup>19</sup> A wide majority (59.5%) think that “a free market economy is better” than “an economy run by the government”, while only one fourth (24.7%) think the opposite. The response in 2009 was similar: 64.3% were in favor of a free market economy *versus* 23.8% in favor of an economy run by the government; percentages that are almost identical to those found in the 2010 survey (62.5 *versus* 24.9%). Thus, six or seven years of crisis has only slightly modified these percentages.

However, when we turn to the details, our vision becomes blurry or impressionistic. There are a range of variations regarding diverse issues that require interpretation.

It appears as if a majority of respondents have a preference for accepting some of the key aspects of a politics habitually associated with a liberal and conservative reading of the system, which presents itself as an attempt to save capitalism in a period of crisis. Thus, they are willing to accept the criteria of fiscal equilibrium, or, we might say, a politics of austerity. A large majority of the surveyed, approximately two-thirds, is in favor of the 2011 reform of the Spanish constitution, that was based on a consensus between the Socialists and Popular Party at the time, and which guarantees a balanced public budget. It in effect requires “that all public administrations maintain on average, counting years of crisis and of growth, a balance between expenditure and revenue” (61.2% against 31.6%). In 2011, the proportion was almost identical, 60% against 32.8%, as if recent years, with a certain recuperation of economic growth in Spain having apparently affirmed the well-founded grounds of the reform.

However, it is necessary to temper this conclusion, placing it in a broader context. In this respect, I offer a couple of speculations in this direction to stimulate our discussion.

First, the vision of the economy underlying this position is a bit blurry or unclear. On the one hand, perhaps we should understand this position, at least in part, as based on a moral idea of the economy as *oikos*, as the domestic economy of a family but also of a nation understood as a sort of shared home, with its distinct and common parts, whose accounts must be balanced for its

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<sup>19</sup> Using the term “capitalism” or “market economy” in other surveys (for example, in the 2009 survey on which the 2010 study by Pérez-Díaz and Rodríguez is based), the results, in terms of approval or rejection seem similar, but there are nuances. For example, asked if “capitalism is the economic system that has been shown to be most capable of eradicating world poverty”, 32.8% think that it is; but if the same question is asked using the term “market economy”, 39.3% answer affirmatively. Asked if capitalism is “an economic system that tends to bring with it poverty for the majority of the population”, 46.8% responded yes, but if the question refers to the market economy, this percentage falls to 39.1%.

survival in a context of limited goods. This is in contrast to a vision of the economy as an open order in expansion, in which persons are above all attentive to their own interests, and which corresponds to the dominant imaginary and, clearly, to that which tends to prevail in the business world and even (to a lesser extent) among academics (economists, of course) and politicians: In other words, to a great part of the *establishment*. For them (those “above”), the connection between the economy and growth is very strong and is common sense; but for much of society (those “below”), that connection may be a bit more fragile, as if remnants of the moral economy of times past remain, expressed through important normative biases in judging the situation and politics. And perhaps, this *establishment* is projecting an imaginary on society, believing that it is shared and in so doing misunderstanding it, and therefore, over-interpreting what, for example (and with reference to the data previously commented on), the acceptance of the mentioned policy of fiscal equilibrium means.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the popular vision of an economy of scarce goods can coexist with a certain underlying optimism regarding the possibility of long-term growth, which is assumed to be inherent to capitalism. Although there are no direct indications of this in the 2016 survey, there are in the 2010 survey, which presented respondents with the fact that per capita income in Spain had quintupled in the last fifty years. When asked if they would ascribe this increase to either the spontaneous development of markets or to the effectiveness of government policies, they clearly opted for the former, in a proportion of 74.5% *versus* 16.8%. We should interpret the estimates of the respondents regarding the duration of the current crisis in a similar sense. Between 2009 and 2011, respondents to our surveys seemed to think that the return to an unemployment rate similar to that which was common in the years prior to the crisis (estimated at around 11%) would be between 3.6 and 5.1 years; while the reality is that in 2016, the unemployment rate continues to be around 20%. It appears that the decline in economic activity was seen as part of a cycle with a downswing that would not last too long. At the time, it could be that this optimism was echoing the typical discourse of the political parties: Those who are in power tend to promise rapid solutions, while those who are in the opposition suggest that a change in the government will also quickly lead to a solution.

Secondly, in regard to the political setting in which the issue of fiscal equilibrium was debated, perhaps we must take into account the initial disposition of many citizens to accept what then seemed the result of the actions of the majoritarian political parties, which led to what came to be the almost unanimous approval of the measure in the parliament. Support for the constitutional clause requiring a balanced budget would then be the

<sup>20</sup> On the moral economy of the past see the classic text by Thompson (1971). On the differences in the vision of everyday citizens and, in this case, economists, see Caplan (2002).



expression of a sort of reflex of political acquiescence (not precisely one of political disaffection: See section 6) in the face of what seemed the almost unanimous position of the political class. We should then say that society accepted this proposed constitutional change with doubts and reservations.<sup>21</sup>

In conclusion, support for capitalism may be genuine, but it is based on a blurry vision of the economy that probably includes, to an important extent, an understanding of it as more like an *oikos* than as an open order, and a result of a network of regulations and public policies in which political/governmental decisions have a central importance (to a great extent as protection mechanisms in the face of the seemingly incomprehensible evolution of the world economy). All of this is with normative reservations of greater or lesser depth, and deep uncertainty over concrete policies as well.

This interpretation seems consistent with the responses to other questions, from which we can infer a preference for a variant of the market economy that involves clear state intervention with an emphasis on social protection, and with an egalitarian orientation, always with a degree of nuances.

I provide some examples here. Respondents seem to be clear that they do not believe that *"to fight unemployment we should make it cheaper to hire workers by reducing the costs of dismissals"*, or said in a more academic manner, they do not want to "flexibilize dismissals": 82.8% are against doing so, and 15% in favor. In addition, they do not want to give primacy to collective bargaining at the level of the firm over negotiations by sectors: 67.8% are in favor of giving primacy to collective bargaining by sectors, 28.6% by firms. In 2010, the percentage for the former was virtually the same, 68%. Again, this is an indication of the priority given to homogeneity, a sort of equality of conditions within sectors.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> An oscillating disposition. Which can be modified if politicians appear to not keep their promises, as would suggest the turn in Socialist policy when, in May 2010, the party announced a policy of austerity and cutbacks, and justified it as being forced to do so by Brussels, foreign markets and international pressure; and as suggested by the rhetorical shift in the Popular Party government when, in December 2011, apparently obligated by the state of public accounts and the worsening of the situation, less than one month after reaching power, they made a similar announcement. In both cases, in the context of severe crisis, the electorate punished the governments: The Socialists were expelled from government a year and a half later, and the Popular Party almost immediately was subject to a drastic fall in its expectations. The result was a crisis in the bipartisan party system and the 2015 elections, which would see a considerable increase in populism. However, with the relative economic recovery, we again find a favorable response to the fiscal balance clause.

<sup>22</sup> But it is doubtful that this attitude implies, per se, a low sensitivity to the issue of the dynamism of the economy; in any case, the implication does not function in the case of Nordic countries, which play a role as references in the Spanish public imaginary.

At the same time, however, respondents' preferences on other issues are not so clear. Regarding the suggestion that *"to fight unemployment we should make it cheaper for business owners to hire workers by reducing the social security payments they must make"*, the proportions holding different positions are relatively similar: 49.4% are against this and 45.2% are in favor. Regarding a guaranteed minimum income, that is, the state providing all Spanish citizens *"a minimum income, just for being citizens and independent of age and economic situation"*, again the proportions for and against are almost the same: 50.8% and 47.8% respectively.

Concerns over the social consequences of capitalism and recognition of the importance of the state are dominant aspects of the blurry, impressionistic painting of capitalism that seems to exist in the collective imaginary. This is an imaginary that supports capitalism, but that is probably open and predisposed to a process of continual rectifications in light of experience, always very much taking into account the evolution of interpretive frames and the moral sentiments of the population.

Consistent with this we find in another question signs of an ambivalence toward capitalism, which includes two components. On the one hand, there is a resistance to excessive criticism of capitalism. This was revealed in the 2009 survey, in which 35.6% attributed responsibility for the crisis to the failure of capitalism, but 58.9% attributed it to abuses within capitalism.<sup>23</sup> And, on the other hand, there is a clear refusal to give capitalism an overall positive evaluation, which can be seen, for example, when issues of poverty and well-being are discussed.

Thus, respondents see the market economy as capable of eradicating poverty, but at the same time they also see it as generating poverty: Although 39.1% believe that *"the market economy is the economic system that has been shown to be most capable of eradicating world poverty"*, 53.9% think that *"it tends to bring with it poverty for the majority of the population"*. Based on this, the capacity of capitalism to eradicate poverty is not the same as it actually doing so.

Behind these assessments there is a moral, emotional and cognitive disposition toward strengthening a protective state, responsible for the welfare of the people. We asked a relatively standard question in this sense so that respondents would position themselves between two alternatives: *"The state*

<sup>23</sup> Without entering into this issue in-depth, I will point out that in identifying those responsible for these abuses, the list was long and included many different political, economic and social agents. See Pérez-Díaz and Rodríguez (2010).

is responsible for all citizens and should take care of those persons that have problems" or "citizens are responsible for their own welfare and they must take care of the situation themselves when they have problems". Seventy-one point nine percent chose the first option and 17.6% the second. In 2011, 67.3% chose the state as having the main responsibility, and in 2009 the figure was 67.5%. It is likely that the crisis has increased individuals' feelings of vulnerability, reinforcing their inclination for this response.

However, the question is somewhat ambiguous, which suggests the need to be careful in our interpretation. On the one hand, it can be interpreted as presenting a kind of crude opposition between statism and individualism. On the other hand, we should consider the effect that including the term "welfare" can have in one of the alternatives. Perhaps, although the terms "state" and "welfare" are not directly linked in the two options, the presence of the latter term can shift the attention and sensitivity of the respondent implicitly toward the symbolism of the "welfare state", with an emotional force that should be recognized. This symbolism is probably a key component in the social imaginary of what is assumed to be a very successful variant of real capitalism, that of the center-Nordic countries that serve as a reference for the Spanish.<sup>24</sup>

The response to another question about the importance of "security" is consistent with this, thus revealing that a high assessment of the welfare state is consistent with an emphasis on security in labour relations, as well as with a certain obsession with personal security in general. Respondents were asked to respond to the following statement: *"In what follows, I will read a brief description of a person. Please tell me how much this person is or is not like you: 'For this person it is important to live in secure surroundings. He/she avoids anything that might endanger his/her safety'".* Approximately 77% believe that this person is like them, either very much (45.9%) or somewhat (31.1%), while 22.5% think this person is not very like them (15.9%) or not at all like them (6.6%).

Behind this range of answers there seems to be a vision of a society that differs in important ways from the imaginary of a part of the *establishment*, which, *grosso modo*, tends to repeat with futuristic flourishes François Guizot's exhortation, more than a century and a half ago (1843) in the French Chamber of Deputies: *"Enrichissez-vous!"*. In its simplest version, these elites seem to say that the task of politicians is to achieve a triumphant society, with high levels

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<sup>24</sup> A redistributive and protective state, clearly, although perhaps but not necessarily more controlling of the economy. For example, in previous surveys there were, on the one hand, clear sympathies by the majority (79.7% in 2009) for a protectionist state that would protect Spanish products from competition, and on the other, a favorable position (59% in 2011) toward the state losing with respect to businesses and civil society.

of growth, high per capita income and world influence; we might say, the currently very fashionable, historically correct versions of what are known gods of old of our Western world: Money and power.

But we should, for now, situate this simple version of things in its immediate semantic context. Because the complete phrase from Guizot was: *“Éclairez-vous, enrichissez-vous, améliorez la condition morale et matérielle de notre France!”*. The task of enriching oneself was situated in the context of a series of moral tasks, referring to an “our France”, that is, to an appeal to community and to a sense of solidarity. Perhaps this context was already problematic at that time, even in the culture of the elites of that period (and Balzac could be a witness of this); or perhaps it would have become even more problematic over time, because the elitist culture would have relatively deteriorated.

The truth is that the complexity of the original expression can be lost in current discussion. To recover that complexity, at least to a certain degree, we asked the survey participants certain “ingenuous” or naive questions about what they desire from politicians and how the society that the latter could help to construct should be. Their responses point in a direction that has certain affinities with the moral reading of the economy that we alluded to before.

We asked them: *“What should be more important in politics: that a country acquires wealth and influence in the world, or that its people have a better life and more free time?”*. Eleven point six percent preferred the former and 84.1% the latter. They were also asked: *“What should the politicians in a country focus their attention on above all, on increasing per capita income and the influence of the country in international affairs, or on increasing the population’s free time and level of education?”*. In this case, 35.9% preferred the former, and 57% the latter.

What these responses suggest is that a traditional moral and apparently pre-capitalist and even pre-modern language is widespread. It is only apparently pre-capitalist because, in reality, a reasonable reading of modernity can be affine to that of Karl Polanyi’s regarding the embeddedness of the economy in the totality of practices and institutions of social life (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]; Granovetter, 1985; Smelser and Swedberg, 2005; Streeck, 2014). Thus, characterizing factors of production as mere commodities, or qualifying them as fictitious commodities, could be placed into question. In such a case, we would need to look for the meaning of the data, and specifically the economic opinions expressed, as embedded in the totality of the experiences of the social groups in question. We might speculate here that a *little tradition* (Foster, 1967; Pérez-Díaz, 1991), a basic alternative culture of the common people, anchored to the experiences of various past generations, many of them of a rural character,

has remained, in this respect, buried.<sup>25</sup> But it has been there, perhaps not in its totality, perhaps not completely coherent, perhaps doubtfully, but clearly recognizable.

To reinforce this image of the complexity and ambiguity of the setting that we find, and of the collective imaginary of the society in question, we can look at an additional question and the responses. Participants were asked: *"Please imagine two types of society, one more innovative but less egalitarian, and another more egalitarian but less innovative, in which would you prefer to live?"* In case the difference in the mood and sensitivity of the common people with respect to the discourse of elites was not sufficiently clear, a great majority would prefer the second, more egalitarian society (67.5%) than the first, more innovative one (30%).

Yes, perhaps the questions we have looked at in this section seem somewhat crude and simple in the midst of a long questionnaire. But there is something in them and in the responses that merits attention. They reflect stereotypes that are quite genuine, and suggest alternative ways of understanding the economy and society that belong to cultural universes and moral languages distinct from the languages and imaginaries *ad usum* of the elites (leaving the counter-elites apart).

The impression is that the great majority of respondents relate better to this language than to that of the (political, economic, academic and media) elites, who see themselves as innovators and futurists, and with great strategic capacities. Which, to some extent, in a distant spectator (or one who we might say is committed only to a certain point)<sup>26</sup> evokes worrying images in the sense that they remind us of what occurred beginning in, for example, 1914, now already a century away.

However, although with a *sui generis* moral language, all this is not necessarily inconsistent with the traditional tensions, compromises and confluences between Christian democracy, conservative liberalism and social democracy in the period after the Second World War. Nor is it inconsistent with the market economy or capitalism as a whole, which respondents do not see as having full responsibility for the crisis.

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<sup>25</sup> Which would again suggest an interest in past forms of the Mediterranean economy (Morris and Manning, 2005). A cultural universe in any case distinct from that which is habitual in the anti-establishment, the populist leaders of the moment, with their interpretive framework somewhere between modern and post-modern.

<sup>26</sup> Ortega y Gasset (1985 [1916]) distanced himself perhaps only to commit himself more; Aron (1981) proposed the formula of the committed spectator.

In short, this is a narrative that refuses to be neatly located within a black or white alternative, and leaves the door open to various possibilities.

Thus we find a nuanced acceptance of capitalism and with blurred cultural foundations, which raises important questions. This very qualified acceptance suggests a willingness, at least for now, to move or accept changes within a range of diverse possibilities, in a process of continual corrections of the capitalist economy and the welfare state.



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#### **IV. MESSAGES: THE SPANISH POLITICAL COMMUNITY AS THE MAIN FRAME OF REFERENCE IN THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE SPANISH**





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## 1. Centrality of the Spanish political community: Frame of reference and substantive legitimacy

Initially, to understand the country's unease, we asked about the world in which Spain finds itself a part, and whether it is lost or not, what course it follows. Who are its references and its models? Now it is time to ask the following questions: In setting a course, who does it? Who is the collective subject or agent that maintains the course or loses the way (or finds itself delayed)? What is this agent's identity and actual name?

In other words, to talk of a course assumes that someone or something follows a path: A specific ship or vessel, with a name, a memory, its own imaginary. This would be the main *community of reference* for the political life of the population. We began with movement, the direction, now we turn to reflexivity: Knowing who moves. If we have doubts about who it is, this suggests that the political community in question has a certain degree of fragility, blurriness; that it is unclear how to refer to it. In the case that concerns us, I will refer to this main community of reference in the political life of the population as the Spanish political community or the Spanish state.

The problem is that in everyday conversation in public space in Spain over recent decades, above all among the educated classes, the expression "the Spanish state" tends to be used above all by those who do not see the political community of reference as Spain. Although I understand the fuzziness that a part of these educated classes tend to give to this expression, I will use the expressions, Spain, the Spanish political community and the Spanish state, not so much to separate myself from them, but to be closer to the language of the common people, who are the object of my interest at this moment. Among them there are many for whom the reality that these terms denote is, as we will see, relatively simple, although this does not exclude the presence of others with mixed emotions and identities in this respect.

For the great majority of survey respondents, the main frame of reference for their public concerns seems to be political life, but not in Europe, nor in

Spain's autonomous regions, but rather in Spain as a totality, as a political community that includes both the central government and the regional ones.

The questions raised are in regard to whether the Spanish have the impression that the relative importance of Spain as a political community, as a state, will increase, remain the same, or will decline as the main reference of political life. Will Spain be capable of resolving collective problems, reflecting the opinions and interests of its people, and maintaining the country's unity? As we will see, the response of a broad majority is that this central reference and its relative importance will continue or be strengthened in the next five to ten years. However, this does mean that we begin with the idea that the importance Spain has as a *main reference* and regarding its *capacity* is already, now, very great. What we can strictly deduce from the responses is that it will not decline; this nuance is important, and leaves open the possibility of various interpretations.

Let us now look at the available data. Respondents were asked about the main frame of reference in political life, first situating them in a medium or long-term horizon: *"Thinking of the next ten years and taking into account that the political life of the Spanish can have three frames of reference (Spain, the autonomous region of residency and Europe), do you think that Spain will be the main reference in the political life of the Spanish more than it is now, the same as it is now or less than it is now"*. Somewhat more than half (53.1%) answered that it would be the same as now, and the rest were divided almost equally: 20.4% responded "more than now" and 22.2%, "less".

Identifying Spain as the main reference in political life can imply the *de facto* centrality of the Spanish state understood in its broad sense, that is, as the totality of both *central* and *regional governments*. I refer here to its centrality in public space, in that it provides context and design and the key to the functioning and arrangement of that space.

This is what, in my opinion, the answers to other questions seem to suggest, all related to the perception that the Spanish have of the strategic capacities of this state, which would define its substantive legitimacy (and which in turn rests on its capacity to resolve problems, to guarantee the permanency of the community and to represent its citizens) (Pérez-Díaz 2008).

The first question is: *"Do you believe that the capacity of the Spanish state, that is, the ensemble of central and regional governments, to solve the country's problems will have increased, will remain the same or will have declined in the*

*next five years?"* The questions that follow this are repetitions of it but with reference, in one case, to the capacity of the state *"to guarantee the unity of the Spanish"*, and in another, *"to reflect the opinions and interests of the vast majority of Spanish citizens"*. Looking at the responses, 73.1% believe that the state's capacity to resolve problems will continue to be the same or will increase; 69.2% think the capacity of the state to guarantee unity will remain the same or will increase; and 75.1% believe that its capacity to represent the opinions and interests of society will remain the same or will increase.

These answers suggest an interesting scenario because they refer to a contrast between two imaginaries, one more ostensible, expressed in elite discourse, and the other more modest, corresponding to the whisperings of the common people. This scenario suggests that the country as a whole may find itself in a curious bipolar situation. On the one hand, rhetorically, it moves in a climate of extreme unease, with a proliferation of the sensations of sharp crisis regarding collective identity, which is reflected in the words and performances of politicians, academics, the media and various elites: A climate that suggests an existential crisis of the state. And, on the other hand, in their daily lives, the common people can live the problem of their identity in a more earthbound manner, assisting the public drama with a certain apathy, with a sort of shrug of the shoulders and a response that *"it's not a big deal"*. This would mean that the great majority of those surveyed do not appear to share this dramatic appraisal of a crisis. Lastly, it would seem as if we have here a type of coolness, or moderation in the tone of the masses, the multitudes that Aristotle points to, without Plato's disdain, as a reference of collective wisdom (Cammack, 2013). These are traits that perhaps merit attention, not to assume this wisdom, but to explore it, to discern its components, including the unease and ambivalence that I will refer to later.

In any case, we find ourselves on a complex terrain, in which things are not *"black or white"*. On the one hand, we can assume that the capacity of the state is significant given that the relative moderation of substantive policies over the last several decades signifies a basic agreement within *the mainstream* over the policies of the two major parties that have taken turns in power, receiving their necessary electoral support with high levels of participation. Its centrality is corroborated, *argumentum a contrario*, by the existence of an extremely large majority (81.8%) who do not want *"a state in which the possibility of autonomous regions becoming independent states is recognized"*. On the other hand, other data (regarding feelings of regional identity and ambivalence toward the political class) raise questions or significantly modify this attribution of centrality and this capacity, as we will see in what follows.

## 2. Issues of identity and territory: A graduated emphasis on the country's unity

We have examined the graduated and nuanced support for a type of European society, a combination of democratic capitalism and state, with an emphasis on equality and well-being, and with the Spanish political community as the main reference in political life. Now, and in relation to this issue, although without going into depth, I will examine the responses of those surveyed to several questions regarding the regional question.

I focus on the reaction of the majority of respondents to the burning question of the "Catalan challenge", which raises the possibility of territorial fragmentation. Consistent with what I consider to be the dominant tendency in responding to the crisis with a recreation of community, that reaction would be a mix of moderation and sensitivity to its complexity, leading to an estimation of future outcomes that some might qualify as prudent and others as excessively optimistic.

We face two facts: one) a range of feelings of identity, and two) that for a majority, this complexity is compatible with a plural identity, because individuals can combine different identities. While 16.3% consider themselves to be only Spanish (12.6% in Catalonia) and 6.4% only feel identified with their autonomous region (14.7% in Catalonia), 74.5% admit having shared identities (69% in Catalonia).<sup>27</sup>

It seems likely that these complex feelings of identity translate into a certain perplexity in terms of designing the desired division of powers between central and regional governments. The distribution of preferences is relatively balanced between five options that include a centralized state (19.1%, 21.5% in 2011), a state as it is now but in which autonomous regions have less autonomy (16.3%, 26.2% in 2011), the same level of autonomy (23.6%, 21.5% in 2011) and greater autonomy (22.8%, 13.7% in 2011), or so much autonomy that regions can become independent (16.5%, 13.8% in 2011). If, to simplify things, we reduce the range of positions to two, in favor of the same or less autonomy or in favor of more autonomy, the contrast between them is 59% for the former and 39.3% for the latter (68.1% *versus* 27.5% in 2011). The comparison with 2011 reveals a slight decline in those who favor the same or less autonomy.

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<sup>27</sup> Certainly, this complexity, referring to the whole population, is reduced when considering different segments of the population in Catalonia (Miley, 2006), in particular, the origin (in Catalonia or outside of Spain) of the parents of respondents (Rodríguez, forthcoming).

This same complexity suggests the need to analyse these results with care; and hence, perhaps the need to take into account the respondents' use of civil forms in discussing this issue, in contrast with the bellicose forms that Spanish politicians frequently use. As we will see in the next section, more than two-thirds of respondents (71.4%) believe that, on the issue of nationalism and Spain's regions, while its peoples tend to reach agreements, the politicians tend to promote conflict.

Perhaps this care is consistent with the underlying feeling of the seriousness of the risk that this issue entails: The sensation that *"the independence of Catalonia would be a historical failure from which Spain would take a long time to recover"* (60.7%), rather than *"something that Spain could adjust to in a few years without too many problems"* (32.4%). As we can see, this is a different mood from that exhibited by those Spanish politicians, who, to not over dramatize things, have tended and tend to minimize the seriousness of this risk, even reducing it to the range of the *"unthinkable"*.

The position of the majority on these issues can, for some, seem realist, and for others, suffer from (or from another perspective, be enriched by) a touch of tactical indeterminism. Thus, while the majority would prefer that there are no referendums for self-determination or the initiation of processes that would lead to it,<sup>28</sup> an even broader majority imagines that in the case of a referendum in Catalonia, the result would be Catalonia remaining in Spain. Perhaps this mix of adhesion to the idea of a relatively integrated community with the desire to avoid greater risks explains the tendency to think that, in any case, a hypothetical referendum for self-determination in Catalonia, if it happens, would be won by those who want to continue being a part of Spain: 69.1% believe this *versus* 16.9% who believe the contrary.<sup>29</sup>

In short, intermixing data and speculation, I propose to tentatively reconstruct the implicit argument in this series of questions and responses in the following way. We have, as a starting point, the Spanish political community as the main reference. However, it is clear that there is a diversity and complexity within this community, in terms of both the sense of identity of its members and their beliefs about the arrangements for the division of powers between governing bodies. We know that the resulting complexity can be managed

<sup>28</sup> Diverse formulas over connected issues were also used with analogous results. Fifty-eight point two percent do not believe that they should permit referendums for self-determination; 52.5% would be against permitting that the citizens of a region vote in a referendum over whether they want to continue being a part of Spain; and 53.5% do not that there should be a constitutional reform to allow autonomous regions to convert to states in a federal state.

<sup>29</sup> The percentage of those who thought that the separatists would win a referendum was greater in 2011: 38.5% *versus* 53.4% who thought they would lose.

without questioning the whole, or it can be managed in a manner that would rupture it. The risk of the latter is a combination of cost and probability; in the case of Catalonia the risk would include the cost of a serious damage to the whole, so much so that it would be seen as an historic failure. Nevertheless, it seems that the probability of this occurring is not considered to be very great among our respondents. I speculate, but it is certainly conceivable that on this point, in this judgment, perhaps a touch of *wishful thinking* is involved; because, ultimately, we have to consider that the probability is greater than is recognized, and the reasonable manner to manage such a risk would be to avoid the very opportunity of a referendum. Hence the tendency to reject the possibility of a referendum - as it could, in turn, be expected to lead to referendums in other communities, thereby reinforcing the damage, and the possible result of an historic failure.

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## **V. MESSAGES ABOUT THE FORMS OF POLITICS: THE CIVIL FORMS OF CITIZENS AND THE BELLICOSE FORMS OF POLITICIANS**





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## 1. The image of a ship at sea

To continually create and recreate the political community (for example, by responding adequately to the unease resulting from the economic crisis or the risks of fragmentation) requires managing social relations within it in a specific manner: There are civil forms that foster this recreation, and other forms that place it in question.

I have used the image of a ship at sea that follows or searches for a course. But this is not a ship that has a permanent form, but rather one that needs to be recreated, rebuilt and repaired over and over again if it is to navigate without sinking. And this ship is always at sea, never arriving at a port and, therefore, always having to be steered, its rudder tilting to one side or the other, formulating and implementing public policies, adjusting its internal mechanisms, the division of corresponding powers, etc.; in other words, it is always afloat in the agitated environment of the high seas, not in the tranquility of the port or a safe place on the coast. Repairing it, adjusting it, reconstructing it, as Otto Neurath suggests, must be done based on our vision of reality, but at the same time as we are immersed in it; or in the terms of Quine, such that a holistic verification can be done, perhaps entirely, but only through a gradual reconstruction (Quine, 1960).

A similar image suggests that the continual recreation of the community in the middle of the open and rough sea requires certain forms of relating on board the ship. We might say that, excluding the possibility of the ship's captain having omnipotent powers, it requires a mix of conversation and coordination, a climate of deliberation and a search for approaches, experiments and life experiences: What I consider civil forms.

However, in addition, other concurrent imaginaries must also be taken into account. Among the cognitive and moral habits of modern political life, in the usual interpretive (existential) framework of political modernity, there is

a significant voluntarist bias,<sup>30</sup> perhaps a hint of nostalgia for a ship's captain with omnipotent powers. This can be seen in particular in the political class, and inhibits the development of civil forms within this class.

This interpretive framework, this bias, fosters a voluntarist reading of human reality in general, and of politics in particular, which becomes a confrontation between ideas and interests and a process of permanent challenges. It suggests a vision of rights and the law as the expression of sovereign will, of political life as a confrontation between friends and enemies around which every crucial decision is to be made, like the *locus* of the decisionism of Carl Schmitt. Life in general becomes a setting for deploying a Nietzschean will to power. Knowledge itself is the result of a Hegelian fight to the death among diverse forms of consciousness (particularly in the interpretation of Kojève [1947]). This voluntarist impulse can easily extend to a conception of the nation as the result of the construction of the imaginary, and even to an invention of the nation, whose creation now only awaits a *fiat*, overflowing with resolution.

All of this leads to a cultural bias that inhibits the development of civil forms; which, with their emphasis on deliberation and an exploration of situations, on listening to arguments and addressing diverse experiences, appear linked, from a decisionist perspective, to a problematic and passive attitude toward managing the crucial problems that arise at each moment.

## 2. The data

Recognizing these contrasting imaginaries, I will examine this matter, suggesting that the image of a ship at sea, that requires civility in its forms, may be implicit in (and consistent with) a good part of the opinions of the common people, as we have seen up until now.

In short, a key in the reaction of the Spanish to the crisis situation has been, perhaps, a commitment to affirming and recreating the political community of reference, which is, in reality, a system of interrelationships. An essential component of this task is the cultivation of relationships or communication between the different parts of the community: Community necessitates communication. As a result, a substantial aspect of political experience, linked by its own roots to the project of the recreation of the political community, consists in the form of doing politics. Make no mistake, form is content; the

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<sup>30</sup> A voluntarism that tends to extend to "the use of names", and leads to ignoring the advice of Confucius to be attentive to rectifying names (Levi, 2002: 126) based on a continual debate over the character and motives of human action, and over its consequences.

manner in which we direct ourselves to others, attending to or neglecting them, says everything or almost everything about what they mean to us, just as much as our acts do. And this, which we recognize as applying to interpersonal relationships, applies to political life as well.

We have seen that, in reference to the design and substance of public policies, the citizenry sends a message revealing its commitment to a free order open to debate, negotiation and important rectifications or modifications. Regarding the forms of doing politics, the message is even more rotund and clear; it is consistent with the message of moderation regarding content, and includes a proposal in favor of civil forms of public debate. In this respect, the language of the common people is revealed to be quite distinct from that of the elites, and politicians in particular.<sup>31</sup>

Now I will look at certain specific questions, returning to the theme of the way in which nationalisms are addressed. As I pointed out before (section 4), those surveyed believe that *"in relation to controversies in Spain regarding autonomy, nationalisms, etc., the majority of the people would tend to reach agreement, but political leaders tend to promote conflict"*. This is the position of 71.4% of respondents, while only 21.2% believe that *"the majority of the people have such strong nationalist sentiments that the politicians that represent them cannot avoid conflict even if they want to."*

However, this characterization of politicians as conflictive is not only in terms of nationalisms; there are many and consistent indications of this. In examining them, we find that citizens may harbor a "culture of suspicion" toward the political class, sometimes interpreting its behavior as dishonest and distorted, and with the intention of manipulating them and avoiding having to be confronted with their own incompetence.

The vast majority of respondents thinks that *"many politicians, of all tendencies, tend to discredit their adversaries to divert the public's attention from the fact that, in reality, they are incapable of solving the country's problems"*. Approximately 83% agree with that statement, versus 15.3% who do not. In 2010, the percentage in agreement was 88.4%. There is a certain suspicion of deliberate manipulation, which perhaps can be better understood by looking at the responses to other questions. On the one hand, the percentage of those who believe that *"many politicians try to intensify the feelings of hostility of*

<sup>31</sup> Politicians who, from the slightly surreal perspective of a friend of mine, Antonio López Campillo, on returning to Spain after several decades in exile, had a language so distinct from the common people, that they could consider it a certain "right" to demand their own autonomous region... Although it is also true that, just in that time of democratic transition, what some or many of those politicians were trying was precisely the opposite: To bring political life closer to what they called the normality of the street.

*their social base toward opposition parties to make compromise between them impossible*", was quite high, 63.2% in agreement and 33.8% not. On the other hand, using another formula, the general population thinks that politicians do listen (hear) but without doing so carefully (without regard to reasons). However, 89.1% believe that *"when politicians listen to the points of view of politicians from other parties, they tend not to be open to incorporating their most reasonable ideas"*, rather, *"they only listen to them to better refute their arguments"*. In 2010 the percentage that thought that was considerably lower, 75.8%.

Note that these opinions of the people are not a criticism per se of the diversity of political positions, nor of the relevancy, for example, of the use of a left/right schema. Some 53.3% think that *"the notions of right and left are still valid for evaluating the positions taken by the parties and politicians"*; and while 39.1% do not agree with that statement, when respondents are asked to place themselves on a scale of this type (from 1 to 7), 95.3% do so.

The people do not object to the existence of differences in opinion, whether in the political class, or within society. Rather, they object to how these differences are expressed. It could be argued that what we see here are certain basic attitudes toward political life, and a normative and emotional disposition in favor of political practices of reasonable deliberation (dialogue), which could perhaps lead to reasonable compromise.

Thus, 83.8% believe that *"public debate should work as a discussion in which everyone has the opportunity to contribute something and to learn"*, in contrast to 14.2% who support *"a discussion in which different perspectives can be clearly distinguished"*.

In the same sense, 72.3% think that *"what should be most important in political life is that the political parties deliberate, negotiate and compromise"*, versus 26% that think that what is most important is that *"the political parties obtain the majority necessary to make decisions as quickly as possible"*. A wide majority, therefore, is in favor of a deliberative rather than decisionist citizenry.

Thus, there is a clear message in favor of deliberation and, we may infer, in favor of a sort of collective learning process based on mutual listening and, eventually (if I may add), the consideration of accumulated experiences. Of course, this learning process can be complicated, but there are indications that it can happen, and happen in modest but significant doses, and in a relatively short time.

For example, in the 2016 survey (field work in May of that year), respondents were asked what they had learned since Spain's general elections in December 2015. The responses are interesting. They were specifically asked if in the time since then (five unusual months of a parliament without powers, an acting government and a public space full of clashing voices) *"the behavior of the major political parties has made them better understand how political parties work"*, while 39.9% answered yes, 58.2% said no, and when asked *"if they understood Spain's problems better and their possible solutions"*; in this case, 21.5% answered yes, while 76.5% said no.

What should be added, to further corroborate the (relative) coherence of citizens' thought, is that, as we will see in section VIII, they see themselves as having practices in their personal and social lives, at least in their openness to the arguments of persons with different political ideas, that are consistent with this position.

All this culminates in what seems to be an appeal to a fundamental ontological question, which includes a cognitive dimension and a moral and emotional one, concerning the manner in which reality is confronted. I am referring to what can be inferred from respondents' responses to the question: *"In current conditions, if you had to choose between two types of politicians, which would you prefer?"*. In choosing between the options that *"they have a moral sense and a common sense"* or *"they have great vision and energy"*, 77.2% chose the former and 18.6% the latter.

The result seems consistent with what we have seen from the responses regarding what is considered most important in politics and what should be politicians' focus of attention. Which is not that the country should acquire wealth and influence in the world, goals that, moreover, can always be thought of as important in the collective imaginary; but rather that the country has political objectives such as a better life, more free time, and better education. This is probably not so much a reference to "useful" goals for a "competitive and acquisitive" society, but to the "noble and benevolent" goals of a "harmonious and well-adjusted" society (though harmonious does not mean unanimity).

In other words, the responses suggest the outlines of a "good society" in the traditional meaning of the term. Or, if we prefer, a society with good sense, which would include a common sense (a sense of reality) and a moral sense that would emphasize a balance between private interests and care of others, solidarity, and even altruism. In fact, this altruism can be seen in certain responses. For example, respondents were asked to respond to the following question. *"Which of these two opinions is closer to what you think?: The most important thing in life is to carry out a personal project, although in the process*

*you may ignore to some extent the well-being of others, or, it often makes sense to renounce our personal projects for the good of others*". Seventy-six point four percent chose the second option, more suggestive of motives of relative altruism, and only 20.7% chose the first, clearly articulated around a personal project.

Of course we can discuss the formulation of this question and introduce nuances to the conclusions that can be drawn from the responses. For now it is enough to point out that the general tenor of the responses suggests, as we will see in the next section, that we are encountering two somewhat different political and moral languages, that of many politicians (and certain media, and perhaps experts), and that of many citizens.

Perhaps many politicians imagine political communication in terms of a supply and demand for policies (as public policies that citizens could purchase), formulated in an unmistakable common language. Perhaps as a result, they become infected by an abstract, impersonal language that they believe (without much grounds) predominates in the markets. In any case, political communication is not, in contrast to what they may think, an issue of *marketing*; it is a "two-way street", with the danger that one or both parties will be confused leading to misunderstanding, to a dead end.

Realist spirits can understand that the respondents, making these declarations theirs, place themselves on an unreal, idealistic, desiderative plane, which entertains them with little less than "celestial music". However, underneath this ironic expression may pulsate a deep misunderstanding of politics, because politics involves not only management aimed at resolving practical problems, but also the celebration and affirmation of a political community. This does occasionally occur in modern politics, and of course characterized ancient politics. This is what Pericles does in his classic funeral oration, for example:<sup>32</sup> Remembering the feeling of being together, fighting together and honoring the dead of the common homeland, and the meaning, therefore, of the legacy that will, as a result, be transmitted to future generations. Politics is a collective *civil performance* that is both prosaic and poetic, a moment of reflection and exhortation, of celebration and mourning.

In addition to this celestial music being a crucial part of the moral impulse that is necessary for a civic commitment, there are also reasons for thinking that respondents' idealism can be combined with a sharp sense of reality; a critical and even acid sense. In this case it is expressed, not only in terms of fragments of a culture of suspicion toward politicians (which I have already alluded to), but

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<sup>32</sup> Tucídides (1989 [5<sup>th</sup> century BC]). About the issue of celestial music, see Pérez-Díaz (2016).

also (as we will see in what follows) through a distanced reading of respondents' attitudes toward society itself, that is, toward themselves: A society of peoples whom they do not trust, who they think do their work only to get by. All of which leave open the possibility of combining idealism and realism in such a way that they are mutually reinforced.





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## **VI. CULTURE: AMBIGUITY IN POLITICAL DISAFFECTION, THE AMBIVALENCE OF SOCIETY TOWARD THE POLITICAL CLASS**



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We have seen that the messages of the citizenry (regarding direction, substantive policies, community of reference and civil forms) seem to be relatively consistent and constitute a sort of common sense culture or a sense of what is commonly shared by the whole (or at least a wide majority within this whole). Now I will address the socio-cultural resources the citizenry have to project these messages in public spaces and to be involved in civic action. I focus on resources related to two interconnected dimensions of the lived culture of the Spanish: Reflexivity and relationality (see section 1). I will proceed in three parts. In this section I analyze the relationship of society to the political class; and in the following two sections, I will look at, first, the knowledge respondents have and evaluations they make regarding the economy and history, and, secondly, the relationship of society with itself.

I begin with what citizens say they expect from their elites. Here we find ourselves with a panorama that is not without ambiguity. Spanish society seems to move guided by a sense of ambivalence toward the political class. Once again, things are not “black or white”; instead, we move within a world of grays. Complexity can lead to confusion, but also invites deliberation and can be instructive, leading to changes in substantive policies and the forms of doing politics. For example, it may lead to public conversation that de-dramatizes or at least avoids the melodramatic touch that the establishment tends to combine with its prosaic tactics and its discourse that states “this is our business, trust in us”.

It is a question of rethinking the relationship between the political class and citizenry, and, in doing so, qualifying perceptions of the challenge represented by the crisis and relativizing the degree of political disaffection. I will begin by examining the data on political disaffection in the 2016 survey; which are consistent with the data we analyzed in a previous book, which revealed feelings that we identified as belonging to an “alert and distrustful society” (Pérez-Díaz and Rodríguez, 2010). After, I contextualize the degree of disaffection, considering findings that counter it. I finish attempting to account for the totality formed by these two contradictory impressions. I will discuss the data and comment in three steps.

The *first step* consists in analyzing the evidence regarding political disaffection. I provide and comment on nine pieces of evidence.

- Clearly, recent swings in the electoral panorama and the decline in the fortunes of the parties that have dominated the scene for three decades already indicate some level of political disaffection; an important factor in this has been the social anxiety caused by the crisis, which has led to questions regarding the ability of politicians to manage it.
- In any case, as the data from the survey reveals, there is no doubt regarding the existence of disaffection. Politicians, according to the survey respondents, do not concern themselves with people like them. Thus, 77.3% agree with the statement that *"politicians do not worry much about what people like me think"*. The evolution of the data show that the proportion that shares this opinion has grown in the last 35 years, from nearly 60% to around 75% (Analistas Socio-Políticos, 2016).
- Or perhaps when politicians do show concern it is in their own interest to do so. Hence, a large majority of respondents believe that *"many politicians try to intensify the feelings of hostility of their social base toward opposition parties to make compromise with them impossible"*: 63.2% agree with this statement versus 33.8% who disagree.
- As found in the 2010 survey, it is likely that there is a belief that politicians "are different", both because of their personal distance from the crisis and because of what it means to belong to a political party. As a result, 76.5% of respondents thought that it was not true that *"many politicians of all tendencies are motivated to solve the crisis because they suffer its consequences in their personal lives"*. They are also seen as different because their essential experience as politicians leads the common people to consider them as part of an apparatus: Asked about *"the behavior of politicians from the party respondents are closest to, regarding debates within the party"*, 69.2% thought that *"they tend to accept the directives of their leaders, almost without discussion"*.
- Being different, it seems logical that their ways of doing politics would also be different from how citizens would do it, particularly their way of carrying out public debate. For example, 89.1% of respondents in 2016 think that *"in general, when politicians listen to the points of view of politicians from other parties... they only listen to them so as to better refute their arguments"*. Only 5.4% think that they "are open to incorporating their most reasonable ideas."

- We can also remember the already mentioned example regarding controversies about nationalisms. Thus, 71.4% of respondents think that *"the majority of the people would tend to reach agreement, but political leaders tend to promote conflict"*, while 21.2% believe that *"the majority of people have such strong nationalist sentiments that the politicians that represent them cannot avoid conflict even if they want to"*.
- It is possible to find an additional indicator of this bellicose/combative animus among politicians by returning to a response given in the 2009 survey. In that survey we find that 68.6% believed that the PP and the PSOE treated each other *"more like enemies"*, in contrast to 29.5% that thought they treated each other *"more like political adversaries"*.
- The contrast between the forms of the politicians and those of citizens stands out even more if we look at how citizens see themselves. Thus, a significant majority (64.9%) believe that when they talk about politics, they do not tend *"to avoid conversations with people holding different political ideas"*, nor limit themselves to *"conversing with people who think in a similar manner"*. However, we should introduce a note of caution. When we asked in the 2010 survey what they thought regarding *"the people"* in general, the answer was different: 69.8% said that *"when they talk about politics, people tend to avoid conversations with persons with different political ideas and to converse with those who think in a similar manner"*. In other words, respondents do not themselves feel *"polarized"*, but they imagine that *"others"* (possibly influenced by politicians and the media?) are.
- The contrast between citizens and politicians extends to their vision of politics. The idea that citizens are made through politics does not seem to be something we can impute to the political class (as we saw in a previous section). This can be inferred from the attitude of politicians toward politics, and from their perception of leadership, with its emphasis on *"their vision and their energy"*.

It does not seem likely that this vision of leadership corresponds to the vision of politics that the common people have, with their very different emphasis on issues that politicians and those around them tend to see as unrealistic (though laudable). They place an accent on happiness, free time and education (perhaps, we might speculate, not only for its utility but as an end in itself). This vision seems curious, a bit strange and outdated in a public space dominated by the media and with politicians as the center of attention, with their ostensible culture exalting leadership and what is now referred to as *"entrepreneurialism"*: A world of *"entrepreneurs"*, selling themselves, their vision and ambitions,

and existing in all spheres, the economy, politics and even personal life. This is the language that the media uses, perhaps believing it reflects everyone's discourse; but in reality it is primarily shared with elites who are perhaps anxious to influence power, if not to be *kingmakers* themselves.

*The second step* of the argument takes into account the factors that relativize the intensity of political disaffection, and suggest an attitude of ambivalence, which is already announced in the dichotomy respondents see between themselves and others in their understanding of the disposition to converse with those who think in a similar manner. (Again, I will present five pieces of evidence in what follows regarding this issue.)

- First, a fundamental datum: The Spanish have voted for the same or very similar parties over three decades, results over this time revealing little more than the typical swings. Only very recently do we begin to observe some "tremors", the impact of which, although meaningful, are still unclear.<sup>33</sup>
- I add that citizens, although with certain doubts, support a repertoire of substantive policies that are not very different from those we find the major political parties offering. Ultimately, almost all of them tend to move, as occurs across Europe, within a fairly narrow range of options between social democracy on the left and a degree of liberal conservatism that tries to situate itself in an ambiguous position between the center and the right.
- The support of the citizens is demonstrated by the fact that when the "two major parties", which most clearly represent these options, reach agreement, the public tends to support this compromise. This is what occurred during the democratic transition, and has continued to occur, for example, with the already mentioned introduction of a constitutional clause requiring "fiscal balance".
- Along with this we should add that the vast majority of citizens place themselves on the left-right scale with no apparent problems. This would be almost unthinkable without some kind of attachment to the parties, which are assumed to have been and still are, the leaders of these political spaces. In fact, they tend to be the protagonists in the processes through which these symbolic spaces are constructed and reconstructed, celebrating rites and the telling of pertinent stories, giving meaning to everyone's location – party militants, members, sympathizers and voters – in one space or another.

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<sup>33</sup> And less dramatic tremors than those that buried the Unión de Centro Democrático in 1982, which was, in fact, a movement of self-destruction.

- Lastly, remember what we have seen regarding the attribution of the strategic capacity of the Spanish state: To resolve problems, to guarantee the unity of the territory, to represent citizens. Obviously, this supposedly capable Spanish state is led by... politicians.

*The third step* in the argument is corollary. I propose that we understand the issue of political disaffection avoiding a dichotomous position of “either black or white”. It would be better to listen to that English pedagogue who insisted that what was crucial in education was to habituate students to “graduated” thinking.<sup>34</sup> Political disaffection tends to be an issue of degree, and to grow or to diminish as a consequence of processes of learning.

It is not easy to learn from the performance of politicians when that performance is reduced to little more than the positions they publicly adopt. However, we remember that when respondents were asked if “*in the time since the general elections of 20 December [2015] occurred the behavior of the major parties has made them better understand how the political parties work*”, although 58.2% answered no, 39.9% said yes; and when we add their response to whether “*the behavior of the major parties had made them better understand the problems of Spain and their possible solutions*”, 76.5% said no and 21.5% said yes.

Although, as a point and counterpoint, unfulfilled promises can also be learning processes, feeding a distrust in some and an excess of trust in others, their opponents. For example, the level of disaffection rises if (as I mentioned before) the two parties that promoted the constitutional clause discussed, appear before their voters as not fulfilling their promises to tackle or overcome the crisis without increasing taxes or cutting spending, and then they immediately increase taxes and cut spending; that is, we can learn to distrust such promises. But this same learning can serve as a stimulus for ingenuously trusting new parties that are “all promise”, as could be the current populisms.

In any case, we can conclude that the degree of disaffection has increased substantially during the crisis, redistributing the trust and distrust in the different parties. But the drama follows its course, and we can expect new acts. Future evolution depends on various factors and, of course, on what politicians and citizens do. In what follows I ask what we might expect citizens to do with the socio-cultural resources they have available.

<sup>34</sup> “[I]ndicating assent or dissent in graduated terms” in the words of William Cory (as cited by Oakeshott, 1991: 491-492).





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## **VII. CULTURE AND REFLEXIVITY: LIMITED CULTURAL RESOURCES IN KNOWLEDGE AND NARRATIVES**



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I address the issue of citizens' knowledge in three areas addressed in the survey: The economy, Europe and Spanish history. I will try to show the extent of what they know and place this knowledge within the framework of their experiences. In addition, I will suggest some of the implications that their limitations in knowledge can have for the development of their civic impulse. Lastly, I will place these limitations within the context of a world populated by agents of all types and with limited knowledge.

## **1. Knowledge about the economy: They may not know much, but they do know something**

We should remember the data that I referred to before: A clear majority (62.9%) think *"that the level of knowledge of the Spanish regarding how the Spanish economy works"* is quite low or very low (*versus* 15.3% who think it is quite high or very high).<sup>35</sup> However, at the same time, a majority also believe that they essentially understand the economy well enough. Respondents were asked: *"Do you believe that the complexity of the economy is increasing and becoming more difficult to understand, or that, in reality, although it may be more complex, with common sense and some information, the essential can be understood?"*. In this case, the responses are almost balanced, with a slightly greater percentage believing that what is essential about the economy is understood (52.7%), *versus* 44.6% who do not believe that.

I would suggest that what we see, given these answers, is a degree of confusion, and we should ascribe a high or medium degree of uncertainty to the social imaginary regarding this issue, which is consistent with the tentative support given to policies of continual rectification or correction of capitalism, perhaps along the lines suggested before (section 3).

Here, several lines of internal deliberation within society open up. The first is an oscillating line between liberalism and social democracy, with an inclination toward reinforcing the importance of the socio-cultural context

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<sup>35</sup> For now, the book by González (2003), which analyzes the vision of the market economy in school textbooks in middle school, suggests a confused and biased perspective on this type of economy.

in which economic activities and exchanges are embedded, but perhaps also toward accepting an important role for individual responsibility in the correct functioning of the welfare state.<sup>36</sup>

Another would be that responding to an image of the macro-economy shaped by the experience of the domestic economy, the originating oikos, and the related vision of the problems of the macro-economy pointing toward the management of the distribution of a world of scarce goods (with the state playing a paternalistic, providential role), rather than in the direction of an indefinite growth.

Another possibility to explore is the suspicion the common people have that they increasingly form part of a broad and extremely complex order, which they sometimes think they might understand using a little bit of common sense and accurate information (see the previous responses), but at other times they believe to be so complex and to change so rapidly, and in such depth, that they do not know if they will learn from their experiences or not. Thus, in the 2009 survey we find that 78.6% think that *"once the current crisis is over, the understanding the public has in general of economic problems will have improved"*. However, in the 2010 survey, 57.5% think that *"to understand the current crisis will have some use, but not much, in preventing future crises, because the economy is becoming increasingly complex"*.

Here we could add two comments or questions that will point toward issues to explore and debate in extenso. The first concerns whether the society understands that it is reasonable to distinguish between learning in the sense of understanding past experience, and learning in the sense of applying this understanding to a future experience; as well as distinguishing between understanding the normal functioning of things and understanding them up to the point of being capable of prudently managing them in a new situation.

The second concerns the question of whether society is conscious that in its uncertainty in applying knowledge to practice, citizens are actually in the company of economic elites, politicians and experts; whom citizens might assume have greater mastery than they actually do. In fact, as has been pointed out many times, the economic crisis is incomprehensible without taking into account the errors and lack of awareness of central banks, banks in general, real estate firms and others that carried out practices that were opaque not only to the public, but also often to themselves (Friedman, 2009). At the same time,

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<sup>36</sup> See the observations of Ringen (2007: 72 and ff.) about what he calls a return to Beveridge and, with this, to giving central importance to the concepts of personal responsibility and self-reliance regarding the design and functioning of the system, and the welfare state.

political elites have followed behind events, as revealed, for example, by the lack of anticipation of the problem that both the Democratic and Republican candidates for the White House, Barack Obama and John McCain, had in the summer and fall of 2008. Regarding the experts themselves, the studies of Tetlock (2005) and others have revealed their modest capacity for anticipating the movements of markets, very similar to that which the dilettanti might have.

## 2. History and narrative

*(1) Europe: Whose history they seem not to know, but that's not really the case*

I summarize here in a few words what I will say in what follows. While the Spanish say they know little of Europe today and of its history, they appear to have a diffuse and tacit knowledge of what Europe was and is, enough for it to impact on Spain's course, to hold certain European countries as models and to remember parallel experiences that have had a deep impact on both European and Spanish political and economic institutions.

In section 2 we saw that respondents saw themselves as not very informed about what European politicians do and how European institutions function. They also do not know, or hardly know, European history. At least this is what most Spanish say: That their "*level of knowledge of the history of Europe*" is very low or quite low (77.7% compared to 11.9% who say that it is quite high or very high). If this is the case, it would be difficult to understand the meaning and, therefore, strategy and underlying story behind what other European countries do and say. Lacking familiarity with these narratives would favor an attitude ignorant of the task of understanding other Europeans. In addition, not sharing their historical memories, nor would there be a place for developing a sense of familiarity with them.

However, should we interpret this confession of ignorance literally? Here we open various lines of debate that can be combined together. On one side, my discussion of the question of direction (section 2) suggests that Europe is quite present in the collective imaginary. There is likely an implicit and diffuse knowledge of European history based on the history learned in general education, and on experiences of European space as migrants, tourists and students, replete with traces of a past that has become familiar. And there is an even richer knowledge of the European history of the past century, with its bellicose and civil events of all types that were of concern to everyone: A dramatic European history marked by civil wars, both European and Spanish, intertwined with the spread of totalitarian and authoritarian experiences; that

is, “recalcitrant experiences”<sup>37</sup> against which Europe and Spain reacted through the institutional fabric of liberal democracy, the market economy and the plural society which now characterizes them.

Yet, while all this implicit and diffuse knowledge is significant as a backdrop, it does not reduce the importance of the general lack of knowledge of recent European history among the Spanish in current debates over what to do today. On this point their ignorance is quite serious. In addition, not having a narrative placing European nations in a broader historical context, suggests the Spanish are insecure about making judgments regarding present problems on a European scale.

Thus, as a consequence of this combination of diffuse knowledge with concrete ignorance, a fragile interpretive framework has been generated. Ergo, there could be a tendency (mere speculation) among Spanish citizens to apply a simple heuristic of national interests in confrontation to understand the process taking place in Europe. As a result, to address the complexity and uncertainty of this process, and given the lack of a deliberative culture common to other European public spaces (Scharpf, 2016; Pérez-Díaz, 1997), it could be that they turn not to culture in a moral sense and in terms of common sense (which would support a *politeia* oriented toward common goods), but rather to the classic (and, we would say, elitist) imaginary of a *post-Westphalian order*: A system of states competing for power, economic resources and influence.

(2) *They also do not think they know much Spanish history, but they have lived it*

Two-thirds (66.4%) of respondents say that “the level of knowledge that the Spanish have of the history of Spain” is quite low or very low, and only 21.9% say that it is quite high or very high. Accordingly, the “details” of Romanization, the presence of the Visigoths and the spread of Christianity, the Muslim invasion and the Reconquest with its various kingdoms, the Hispanic monarchy with the conquest and colonization of the Americas, the encounters and clashes among the Spanish in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, etc., all this, one might suppose, may exist in a fog of semi-consciousness. Therefore, however this history is understood, it remains crucial to understand the sense that each autonomous region, for example, gives to its nationalist or regionalist strategies, the extent of social tensions and the background to moral and religious debates.

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<sup>37</sup> See White (1981) and Pérez-Díaz (1984). These experiences would be, above all in their extreme manifestations, like a *performative contradiction*, the refutation of an erroneous position for the contradiction between what is said and what is done, because the political class would promise its audience a paradise and would construct a hell, and as a result, what was done refuted what was proposed.

The poverty of the historical imaginary of the people, influenced by a narrative lacking the thread of an argument and specific details, could be reinforced by a tendency toward *presentism* in the rhetoric of politicians and in the information disseminated by the media. In these conditions, one could understand the tendency of the people to apply a simple heuristic of conflicts of interests to understand the current political moment, seen as a space dominated by conflicts between groups around the division of power, wealth and status.

Is this all that needs to be said regarding the Spanish and their sense of history? Probably not, as memory of that which is closest in history must also be taken into account, which is, as already mentioned, the democratic transition, understood as a response to the dramatic events of the preceding decades. This is not just a detail, but rather a transcendental issue in the narrative of the past as it concerns the present life of the political community. Not without reason, the Spanish say they are proud of their recent history. In the survey, respondents were asked to *"think of the stage of history in Spain from the democratic transition to today"*, and they were then asked *"if they believed we can feel very proud, quite proud, a little proud or not proud at all of this stage?"* Fifty-two point three percent say they feel very or quite proud, and 41.2% a little or not proud. Although we must take into account that the question was stated in different terms, in 2011, 78.9% strongly or quite agreed with the statement *"the Spanish can feel proud of what we have done together in the last thirty years"*. This suggests an important and worrying decline in attitudes toward the transition.

In any case, it could be inferred from the above that at least a majority believes they know this recent history, as it could not be so highly thought of without believing one had fundamental knowledge of it. This is the history of the last four decades since the democratic transition. This is the lived culture of four decades of "normalcy", which can be attributed to liberal democracy, the market economy and a plural society. This tradition, emerging in the middle of the 1970s and prepared by several crucial processes in the two previous decades, has not been interrupted or forgotten. This is shown in the survey in an indirect manner through the feelings of pride just mentioned, combined with the totality of all that we have seen in this essay - including the references to Spain as a political community being continually recreated, to the moderation of substantive policies, and to the non-conflictive, dialogic character of the political forms desired by the vast majority. This tradition is still alive and is a lived culture and a crucial anchor. What emerges is the possibility that the Spanish people learn from the experience in progress, and give meaning to the passage of time with a narrative that permits the reproaches and praises of the present to be situated alongside of memories of both fulfilled and unfulfilled promises.



### 3. Transition: From Historical knowledge to being oneself

In short, we have a citizenry with a significant level of disaffection toward the political class, although without breaking from it. The debate between both continues. However, there is a political deficit to overcome. At first, the crisis creates an opportunity and a stimulus to fill this deficit through the intervention of the public. What the public does depends, among other factors, on the trust it has in its own understanding of the matter, but also on its trust in others, in itself and in its capacity and drive to act.

Its knowledge in general seems modest, but not so much that it excludes this intervention. At least the people know they know little; they are conscious of their limits. These limits imply a potential on which to build and to develop. These limits are not only in relation to their knowledge, but also to their social resources, and above all, to the crucial resource of their trust in themselves.

This self-trust is connected to the quality of knowledge. Regarding historical knowledge, we can raise an issue relevant for my argument and aimed at better understanding the potential and limits of the civic commitment of the society. Without an adequate narrative, one that is sufficiently persuasive to interest people in public issues, they would lack motivation and a civic impulse. The key to civic passion in ancient societies was fidelity to the memory of ancestors, and, to a lesser extent, to forthcoming generations, as well as (and implicit in the anterior) fidelity to a land consecrated by the gods, whether local or distant. These evocations gave sense to the sacrifices necessary when the health or survival of the *res publica* was in danger. This happened in the Greece of Pericles, which I have already alluded to, but also in the Roman republic, in the late-medieval imaginary, in more or less revolutionary full modernity, in relation to nationalist drives of the last two and half centuries (Greenfeld, 2006), and on until the present.

From this we can infer that without a lived history and narrative (and not merely recited or “represented”), the people lack some significant aspect of the motivation necessary to generate a public interest, not to speak of a civic passion that would imply the sacrifice of private interests; the forgetting or trivialization of history being an indicator of the superficial character of contemporary civic commitment. Ultimately, without a narrative there is no identity, on either a personal level or a collective level.<sup>38</sup> And this afflicts all those without a historical memory, whether everyday citizens or the elites of the moment.

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<sup>38</sup> On the relationship between narrative and identity, see Wuthnow (2005) and Lamont (2000).

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## **VIII. CULTURE: SELF-ESTEEM OR AMBIVALENCE TOWARD ONESELF, AND THE POTENTIAL AND LIMITS OF CIVIC COMMITMENT**



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It is not enough to address the cognitive dimension of what citizens can do in relation to the political. Their reflexivity also has a volitional and emotional dimension intertwined with the cognitive. This refers not to general knowledge, but to a practical knowledge that, connected to an emotional and moral impulse, leads to practical action, in this case, to some form of civic action. From this perspective, I will now focus my attention on a series of issues related to the civic commitment of the Spanish, such as their interest in politics, their search for political information, their judgments regarding the role of the media in this respect, their willingness to speak in a certain way about political matters, and their experience with and relationship to participation in associations. I begin with a series of observations that reveal the positive side of this experience, and I will continue emphasizing its more problematic side. I will end on a nuanced note.

## 1. We begin with the positive

Once more, I begin presenting the different pieces of evidence:

- For now, half (50.6%) of those surveyed say that they have a lot or quite a bit of interest in politics, *versus* 48.9% who say they have little or no interest in politics. The percentage interested in politics is quite high; probably the highest it has been since the beginning of the 1980s: It was around 20 to 25% during the 1990s and has been growing since 2002/2003 (Analistas Socio-Políticos, 2016).
- A confirmation of this (relative) interest in politics is revealed in the time the respondents *"dedicate each day to following information, news and commentary on politics on the television, radio, in the newspapers or on the internet"*. A clear majority (60.5%) of respondents dedicate a half hour or more per day and approximately one fifth between 15 and 30 minutes, while one fifth spend less than one quarter of an hour.
- However, while respondents turn to the media to keep informed about public affairs, they do so from a critical perspective. The great majority, 72.2%, think that *"the media informs about political affairs in a disorderly*

*and confusing manner”, versus 24.1% who believe the media does so “in a clear and orderly manner”. Those “critical” of the media in this way constituted 68.1% in 2010 and 72.9% in 2011.*

- This interest in politics; the apparent critical distance from the media, with its tendency to emphasize conflicts (conflicts are news, more so than compromises and agreements); along with the data already discussed regarding the distance respondents feel toward how the political parties do and debate politics, all seem consistent with the relative frequency with which respondents talk politics with their friends: Approximately 55% say they do so often or sometimes (a level that has grown in recent years [Analistas Socio-Políticos, 2016]). These results regarding conversing about politics reveal an interesting nuance and connect with what we know about people’s attitudes toward the best form of doing politics. Respondents were asked to answer the question *“when talking about politics, do you tend to avoid conversations with persons with different political ideas and speak with those who think similarly to you?”*. Sixty four point five percent respond negatively, while 30.4% say yes.
- We can go a further step and consider the associative experience of the respondents. Such experience provides training in the capacity to participate in collective action, with a common interest, first, in participating in debate and, after, in carrying out a common action. Collective action may itself be aimed at a civic objective or it may prepare the way, form the dispositions and provide the necessary instruments for such action.<sup>39</sup> According to the survey, 23.3% belong to and are very active in an association, 16.8% belong to an association but are not very active in it, 13.7% only pay the corresponding fees to belong, and 46.1% say they do not belong to any association.
- However, the attraction of associationism is not only expressed in belonging to associations, but also in manifestations of the influence that they have and that they should have. The respondents are clearly of the opinion that *“voluntary associations of all types, such as NGOs or similar institutions, have little or no influence when it comes to solving the country’s problems”*: 75.3% believe that, in contrast to 18.2% who think that they have a lot of or sufficient influence. The proportions are reversed when they are asked about the influence that *“they should have”*: 81.7% believe that they should have a lot of or quite a bit of influence, and only 8.5% think they should have a lot less or quite a bit less.

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<sup>39</sup> And we know that among those who participate in associations, there is a greater propensity for civic participation (Putnam, 2000).

## 2. And now we address the negative

Now we should look at the potential for civic action inscribed in this experience of associationism and in the interest in politics against the backdrop of a society with a critical attitude toward itself. In terms of mentality and life experience, we are looking at a society that doubts its own capacity to act in a coordinated manner. We have here a sort of limit or inner obstacle that needs to be taken into account. Perhaps the necessary self-confidence and self-esteem to maintain a civic impulse are not at adequate levels among the Spanish.

This is inferred from the responses to three questions, on generalized social trust, on the frequency of work well done, and on recognizing the merit of doing things well. The results, as we will see in what follows, are quite telling, suggesting that Spanish society sees itself, at the moment of truth, as a relatively untrustworthy society. More than a “good society”, it is seen as a society where one dwells with caution.

I again present the pieces of evidence:

- Generalized social trust is lacking: 62.2% think that *“you can’t be too careful in dealing with people”*, versus 36% that believe that *“most people can be trusted”*. In the 2009 survey, the percentages were 61.1% who expressed distrust and 37.2% who were basically trustful. In general, it is necessary to take into account that these levels of generalized trust have *grosso modo* remained quite stable over the last four decades (Analistas Socio-Políticos, 2016).
- In choosing an option from the statement *“the majority of people in Spain try to do their job very well or they just do the minimum that’s needed”*, approximately three-fifths (61.5%) opted for the second and one-third (33.4%) for the first, similar proportions to those from the 2011 survey: 55.7% and 36.3% respectively. If we understand “just do the minimum that’s needed” as “not doing their job very well”, then the idea is very widespread that the Spanish are not very trustworthy in terms of doing things well, which is something fundamental, as we depend on others in society to meet our expectations.
- Behind this practice of not doing a job well, is probably the fact that when something is well done it is not recognized by society. Again, respondents were presented with a dilemma, the choice between two descriptions as they were asked: *“Which of the two following statements better describes what occurs in Spain: Work well done is usually recognized or rewarded with success, or, work well done is often met with silence or indifference?”*.

Seventy-five point eight percent chose the second alternative and only 18.5% the first. We obtained almost identical results in the 2010 survey: 76.7% and 18.6% respectively.

This is all a reflection of a relatively untrustworthy society, careless toward its work and suspicious (silent, indifferent) of those who do it well. This does not go well with a high propensity to get involved in civic action, nor with a high probability that there will exist, to a high degree, habits of civic action among the population.

If the society does not have great trust in its politicians (nor in the media) or in itself, it will be more likely that a tendency toward despondency or irritation will emerge, or alternately, it may lead to indolence and/or explosions of indignation. Perhaps, a trust in magic words or rites of atonement will emerge as well, for example, through scape-goating, or in the form of prophets or mystical leaders of the masses.

However, recourse to developing the potential of common sense and a moral sense, of which the survey has left many indications, remains. The negative side only tell us half of the story: That society can be directed toward a state of "voluntary servitude" (La Boétie, 2002 [1576]) to the elite, whether of the *establishment* or of the *anti-establishment*, under the form of oligarchs or demagogues. The other half of the story is suggested by the many indications already mentioned of the application of good judgment (or common sense and moral sense) in public affairs. Once more, what we refer to is not a determined story, but rather an open and contradictory drama.

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## **IX. CONCLUSION: AN OPEN AND DRAMATIC PROCESS**





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This study is written from the perspective of an interpretive sociology. It is based on a social theory that attempts to integrate the dimensions of structure and agency in an open and dramatic temporal process, and locates culture and meaning at its center. This is a social theory that ultimately places stress on an agency that (in the face of the prospect of continuing crisis) makes use of certain specific resources – relationality, reflexivity and civic impulse. Thus, this process, influenced but not determined by structural and institutional factors, is open to various possibilities, resulting from the options among which the agency in question can and must choose, using its resources that include, first and foremost, those of a socio-cultural nature. These possibilities are “dramatic”, as they may involve intense and deep conflicts. Certain options will be preferable to others, and this preference will contain a cognitive and a moral dimension. The updating of said options implies a process involving the continual reconstruction of agency, which is defined not so much by its making of itself, but by its doing so with others.

Relationality, reflexivity and civic impulse are interconnected. Relationality refers to agents being in relationship with each other in such a way that their decisions and choices (their projects, their voices) can only be understood as proposals and responses to other agents. What I have referred to in this study as “the voice of the audience” is exactly that: A sort of proposal and response of the common people, the citizens seen as spectators, to other voices: In particular, to the proposals and responses of *the actors on the stage*, the elites and counter-elites of the moment. Reflexivity is common to all these agents. It refers to their greater or lesser capacity to be conscious of the meaning they attribute to their acts, and to their capacity to understand the meaning that others attribute to them. But it also refers to their capacity to learn from the consequences their actions have. Of course, this learning process is problematic, because it is possible to extract both correct and incorrect conclusions from experiences. This can be reflected in forgetting, disinformation, misunderstanding, obfuscation, etc. In other words, the learning process can be affected by an increase in entropy, a risk that exists in all social processes – *except* in situations with sufficient amounts of (reasoned) information and (civic) energy; i.e., sufficient amounts of intelligence and moral sentiment: A moral sentiment that includes judgments of situations, motivation and impulse.

In the case that concerns us, I have stressed the core of reasonableness (sense of reality, common sense) and decency (moral sense) of the majority

of the common people in Spain, who have found themselves living in the current crisis situation, understood in its broadest sense, as a crisis that appears complex, deep and perhaps lasting. I have done so understanding, analyzing and explaining their voice, but also situating that voice among a chorus of voices involved in managing the crisis. They confront the voices of the elites and their milieu, both those of the *establishment* and the *anti-establishment*, both oligarchs and populists.

I situate and, I would add, defend this voice: That is, I evaluate the historical possibility of a reasonable and reconciled (but not homogeneous) society favorably, with the hope that this facilitates discussion and strengthens the plausibility of the interpretation. The approximate realization of such a society seems possible to me under the current historical conditions, and preferable as well, as it is relatively better, or certainly a lesser evil, than the available alternatives. This support is relative, leaving the door open for rectifications of greater or lesser scope. Ultimately, it is support for a “civil society” *sensu lato* (Pérez-Díaz, 2014), which includes a liberal democracy, a market economy and a pluralist society (with a corresponding associative fabric), and a complex and diverse cultural backdrop that gives meaning to the institutional framework. This perspective also opens a space for more distant attitudes, less involved in the habitual public debate, and which can provide recourse to a “celestial music” (Pérez-Díaz, 2016)

Behind this support, a culture of what I have called *good sense*, the combination of the common sense and moral sense of the common people, plays or should play a central role: A *synderesis*, if one wants, from classical philosophy. My approach in this study has been to suggest the potential and limits of the good sense of the majority of the common people in a specific historical situation and I support my argument with specific though limited evidence. I suggest taking a step in this direction, an invitation to a discussion.

Using this approach to these issues, I have found the following from our survey: The public, the audience, has communicated four major messages. First, this good sense is reflected in the acceptance of the course that the Spanish have been following for some time. This is the course set by Europe, with its institutional framework for a “civil society” (democracy, market, social pluralism), and is not one that has been imposed, but instead adopted; adopted over the past four decades – since the democratic transition, after a previous, dramatic sequence of conflicts, including civil war and an authoritarian regime that lasted four long decades. In other words, the relational and reflexive dimensions of Spanish culture in the current moment are supported, explicitly or tacitly, by a historical narrative. Based on this narrative, for the majority it is not a question of inventing a course for the here and now, but on continuing to

live in a sort of *present continuous*, attentive to its incessant transformations and following a course that already exists. The moral impulse, the motivation toward the future that this course points toward may appear or not; but if it does, it is, in great part, due to what came before, and to it being reaffirmed. It is anchored in a narrative, and this anchoring can take place with a greater or lesser degree of reflexivity. If it is with less, it could be so because it happens that people hardly notice the narrative, or are entertained with stereotypes that barely affect them, perhaps because, as could be suggested by Confucius, they lack the corresponding rituals, that is, rites to return to experiences lived and imagined in common,<sup>40</sup> which could well come at the hand of the civil forms referred to in this text.

Secondly, we have also seen that, when formulating positions regarding specific institutions and public policies, a wide majority are situated in a meeting place between liberalism and social democracy, which was actually the hybrid terrain of the Christian Democracy of the three decades following the end of the Second World War. This is an area, we might say, of moderation and deep moral sentiments. However, this does not imply a conservation of the *status quo*, but rather a compromise with a process of continual adjustments and reforms of greater or lesser depth; reforms that, in the case of the Spanish, have certain distinctive characteristics. Our respondents support a market economy, not one directed by the state, although they place greater stress on equality than on innovation, and more on welfare and the responsibility of the state than on the responsibility of individuals. Thus, they may prefer, for example, greater employment protections rather than so-called *flexible* employment policies, which they perceive as favoring precariousness, and a minimal universal income. I will not emphasize the specifics of these proposals, but rather their general tenor, compatible, it seems to me, with a wide margin for deliberation and experimentation on all of these issues. This tenor, along with the limited trust they have regarding their own knowledge about the economy, as well as what we know about their civic capacities and their preference for civic forms of politics, suggests an experience of internal conversation (conversations among friends, in associations, etc.), and a disposition to be a part of a general conversation in public space over these issues.

Third, in addition, I have shown that, in the imaginary of the Spanish, the collective agent (I used the metaphor of a ship following a specific course), which determines the essential nature of public policies, is the Spanish political community. This is where we find the tendency of the great majority of Spanish people to take this as the community of reference in political life. We can call it the “Spanish state”, understood as the *totality* of the central and

<sup>40</sup> See Lévi (2002: 37). In a certain way, the “celestial music” corresponding to such rites is what is lacking.

regional governments. Although reservations exist regarding its effectiveness in managing the current crisis, at least in the short term the assumption is that its capacity to resolve problems, to represent the interests and opinions of the citizens and to maintain national unity, is not going to diminish in relation to a European government or a disperse series of regional governments barely or limitedly connected to the totality of Spain. And this broadly held attitude is reinforced by what we know of the complex and graduated manner the Spanish have of understanding their regional identities, and (to a lesser extent) how they imagine the issue of possible regional referendums for self-determination can be managed.

Fourth, it would be possible to see a series of steps in the evidence presented that are articulated around the central idea that the response to the challenge of the crisis begins with a commitment to the continual recreation or reconstruction of a Spanish political community setting a "European course". This implies maintaining and strengthening a free order and a civil society *sensu lato* (combining democracy, market and pluralism), with public policies and certain institutional adjustments characterized by a degree of "moderation" (although the essential, concrete decisions that shape the profile and content of such policies remain pending). But to reach this point, the survey reveals something that gives the voice of the citizens special relevance: Their preferences regarding the forms of doing politics (recognizing that forms are content). The common people are not merely asking for civil forms of doing politics, but are clamoring for them, demanding forms appropriate for adversaries, not political enemies, and for political adversaries that listen and incorporate what is reasonable from their opposites. These forms evoke, by their very nature, rituals of reconciliation. Their appeal to these forms comes from a way of understanding and evaluating politicians, first, not so much for their vision and energy, their determination to impose themselves, but for their reasonableness and moral sense, their determination to work together, whether in tandem or alternating in power. Clearly this is not a language often seen in political life. It is also clear that citizens know, or believe, that their way of being is different from that of politicians, and, as such, they imagine that politicians barely take them into account. All of which seems to point, *grosso modo*, toward a different vision of politics, a different way of doing it and defining it.

Regarding the resources necessary to make these four major messages effective, the survey provides us with interesting material for calibrating the potential and limits of citizens' dispositions to articulate this vision and carry out this change. At least in reference to the socio-cultural resources they have available. In this respect, the data are complex, and their interpretation is open to debate. On my part, I suggest the following:

First, what the survey tells us regarding their knowledge of Europe, Spanish history and the economy can be read as a glass half empty or a glass half full; I would emphasize the latter reading. I understand that, without strengthening the knowledge they hold in all these areas, there is a lack of the fabric for a sufficient civic capacity. These are fields of knowledge that foster the necessary moral sentiments for developing a civic impulse. The economy is the issue *par excellence* for public policy, while history is the basis of the narrative that can be of crucial importance for the development of motivation and a civic impulse: A sense of collective identity, a sense of duty or fidelity, or a tie of reciprocal obligation with previous generations and those to come. For this reason, politicians with their short-termism or presentism, who see the society in terms of interactions among individuals focused on the present, tend to undervalue it.

Secondly, regarding trust, I would suggest that the distrust of society toward politicians in turn generates an insecurity in politicians (ultimately, they are semi-conscious of their limits), and explains part of their resistance to listening to the citizenry, particularly in terms of their forms of doing politics. This resistance is understandable, to begin with because it is understandable that politicians resist listening, *in toto*, to the voices of those who largely distrust them. This distrust is not complete; “largely” is a reference to the ambivalence of the citizenry who are going through a deep and lasting episode of political disaffection, which in turn is a disaffection only to a degree, as I have indicated, although still significant. This disaffection is linked to both what politicians do and to their form of being. This form of being is a result of many politicians being a product of a process of socialization that tends to inculcate the idea that they are carriers of a resounding truth, that they know more and want what is best, and that their adversaries know less and do not want the common good. They entertain themselves denouncing each other. They are all, in this respect, what René Girard (1978) would call, mimetic rivals. And their milieu does not contradict this. The media can fall into the temptation of playing *kingmakers*. Experts can be prudent in their dealings with the powerful of the moment, sensitive to the opportunity to become advisers to the prince.

But this is not only a question of knowledge and of trust in others; it is also a question of emotional, cognitive and volitional resources, such as those implicated in the phenomenon of trust in oneself. Sensitivity and decency, common sense and moral sense are not enough. The people must take a step forward to clearly affirm their voice, gesture and civic action, and this is difficult when this trust in oneself is limited. Again we are faced with a complex phenomenon, and an open process. On the one hand, there is interest in politics, evidenced by the time the Spanish dedicate to being informed, their disposition to talk about politics among friends, including those that think differently, and their participation in associations, which is likely on the rise. On the other hand,

there is the diffuse sensation of living in a country in which one cannot trust the majority of the people, who tend to work just to get by and who do not recognize effort. There will be those who believe that these opinions reflect habits and routine responses, that we are talking about stereotypes with little basis; and there will be those who are of the opinion that they are the acid truth, supported by lived experiences.

In any case, without the socio-cultural resources of reflexivity and trust, the potential for a continual and decisive intervention by the citizenry cannot happen. This would be, remember, an intervention a certain distance from both the *establishment* and the *anti-establishment*, in favor of that European course, that relative moderation, that continual recreation of the political community, those civil forms. All based on a *down to earth* culture, of common sense and moral sense. However, whoever talks of common sense and moral sense should also talk of the limits that accompany this good sense; after all, we do not find a down to earth culture in heaven. In other words, if we talk about potential we must also talk about the limits of that potential, beginning with a necessarily limited civic disposition due to the commitment citizens have in other spheres of life.

I conclude with two observations.

First, the key to the potential of society's civic impulse is perhaps in this sense of limits, which could, along with a sufficient dosage of civic passion, transform the meaning of the political. The message of the voice of our audience could be interpreted as placing into question, based on an appreciable dose of good sense, the way many politicians have of doing politics. Here it would almost remind us of that ancient Greek – and what could be more logical than returning to the ancients to prepare ourselves to soberly manage these coming intoxicating times. As pointed out by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1971; see also Jaeger, 1986), the ultimate effort of Demosthenes was to appeal to the people so that he himself could improve, as a way of improving his politics; hoping that their reasonable and virtuous voice could educate their leaders. We ought to think that what we have, in this case, in today's Spain, is something like an audience that, in an exercise of pedagogy and a colloquial key tells its politicians the following:

"Do not imagine that you are going to set us a course, adopting a prophetic air (we say this without disdain for the authentic prophets that emerge from time to time). We are all already set on our course, and have been for some time, after many vicissitudes, and through a network of decisions, institutional pressures and external influences. We accept it; we do not essentially question it. It is not the course toward the ideal city, but perhaps it is the best course possible,

given the circumstances. Nor is it necessary that you adopt a radical position that questions the framework of political and economic life, or that you defend and maintain it at all costs; we (almost) prefer relative moderation, continual reforms, although sometimes quite deep, and reasonable adjustments. Nor is it necessary that you over dramatize the issue of collective identity (and with such anger or disdain toward your adversaries of the moment): We are showing you a predisposition to accept and live with complex identities. In general, do not engage in so much fighting among yourselves; it is not necessary that you affirm your leadership in that way: We are telling you, both actively and passively, that we prefer more civil forms of political relationships. Our political disaffection toward you is clear, but it is only up to a certain point. You should not be indignant about it, or be overwhelmed, or avoid it. Take into account that we do not feel hostile, but rather ambivalent: This can change and may diminish if you react with good sense. And yes, we recognize that our weakness, apart from a relative deficit in our knowledge, is a lack of trust in ourselves and a civic impulse. Perhaps this is an issue where, realistically, we should not expect much from you. In any case, in this respect, it is our own responsibility that is at stake."

Clearly, to be fair, and as corresponds to the open character of the ongoing drama, something more must be added to the audience's discourse. Namely, that a potential exists not only for the best from the citizenry, but also for the worst. I end with this second observation.

The potential for the best is not a result of the development of the capacity for adaptation, which, by itself, might be a form of mere survival, resignation to indefinitely maintaining a variant of the status quo. Instead, it is the potential for a more noble, more reasonable and just form of doing politics. The citizenry can aspire to more if their reflexivity, the quality of their social relations and their civic impulse substantially improves.

At the same time, the potential for the worst implies a decline in the future possibility of the common people to achieve their own interests, at whatever costs, of their being carried away by a mix of irritability and passivity concerning common affairs, and perhaps, in following this path, ending up (as already pointed out) in a state of more or less conscious and voluntary servitude to the oligarchs or demagogues of the moment. Or relapsing into such a state again and again.





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## **APPENDIX 1**

**DATA FROM THE ASP SURVEY 16.059,  
AND FROM OTHERS ALSO CITED IN THE TEXT**



TABLE 1

**SPAIN (2009-2011, 2016). OPINION ON THE COURSE OF THE COUNTRY**

*TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE GENERAL SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY, HOW DO YOU THINK THINGS ARE GOING IN SPAIN? ARE WE MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION OR ARE WE MOVING DOWN THE WRONG ROAD?*

	Sep. 2009	Sep. 2010	Sep. 2011	May 2016
Correct direction	30.5	25.9	12.0	20.4
Neither option (DO NOT READ)	6.4	8.2	5.1	5.9
Wrong road	58.5	58.7	79.0	70.5
DK/NA	4.6	7.3	3.8	3.2
N	807	811	1,008	607

Source: ASP surveys 09.047, 10.048, 11.050 and 16.059.

TABLE 2

**SPAIN (2011, 2016). ECONOMIC OUTLOOK OF THE HOUSEHOLD FOR THE COMING YEAR**

*DO YOU BELIEVE THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD WILL BE BETTER, THE SAME OR WORSE THAN IT CURRENTLY IS IN ONE YEAR'S TIME?*

	Sep. 2011 (*)	May 2016
Better	17.5	26.2
The same	47.1	53.2
Worse	29.8	17.3
DK/NA	5.6	3.4
N	1,008	789

Note: (\*) In 2011 the possible responses were much better, somewhat better, the same, somewhat worse, much worse.

Source: ASP surveys 11.050 and 16.059.

TABLE 3

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). THE WORLD THAT IS ADVANCING OR THAT IS STAGNATING**

*DO YOU FEEL YOU BELONG TO THAT PART OF THE WORLD THAT IS ADVANCING WITH SUFFICIENT DETERMINATION; TO THAT WHICH IS ADVANCING, ALTHOUGH RATHER SLOWLY; TO THAT WHICH IS STAGNANT; OR TO THAT WHICH IS GOING BACKWARDS?*

Advancing with sufficient determination	21.5
Advancing rather slowly	31.3
Is stagnant	28.5
Is going backwards	16.7
DK/NA	2.0
N	607

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 4

**SPAIN (2009, 2016). WHAT COUNTRY COULD BE OUR ECONOMIC MODEL***WHAT COUNTRY COULD BE A MODEL FOR THE SPANISH ECONOMY?*

	Sep. 2009	May 2016
Germany	31.1	24.2
France	11.9	3.3
Sweden	6.1	7.1
United States	5.2	3.3
Netherlands	3.4	1.9
Switzerland	3.8	4.9
United Kingdom	3.1	4.4
Norway	2.0	5.3
Finland	1.2	5.3
Denmark	1.2	3.4
Others	5.6	7.5
None		2.2
DK/NA	25.5	27.1
N	807	789

*Source:* ASP surveys 09.047 and 16.059.

TABLE 5

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). REMAINING IN THE EUROZONE***DO YOU BELIEVE SPAIN SHOULD REMAIN IN THE EUROZONE OR ABANDON IT AND HAVE ITS OWN CURRENCY AGAIN?*

Remain	72.6
Exit	22.2
DK/NA	5.2
N	1,210

*Source:* ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 6

**SPAIN (2011, 2016). THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION***WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN WITH THE EU IN THE NEXT 20 YEARS? (READ)*

	Sep. 2011	May 2016
Member states will reclaim certain powers to the detriment of the EU	23.7	8.7
EU institutions will increase their powers at the cost of member states	19.0	23.8
The situation will be very similar to the current one	44.4	60.9
DK/NA	13.0	6.6
N	510	789

*Note:* (\*) In 2011 the status quo option read "it will be the same as now, with certain policies closely coordinated at the European level and others the exclusive domain of member states".

*Source:* ASP surveys 11.050 and 16.059.

TABLE 7

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). GREATER EUROPEAN INTEGRATION OR DEVOLUTION OF POWERS***WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST SOLUTION TO SOLVE THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS EU COUNTRIES ARE FACING?*

That each country regains greater control over its economic policies	46.5
That the EU plays a more fundamental role in the economic policy of member states	36.6
That the current situation continues	13.1
Other (DO NOT READ)	0.8
DK/NA	3.0
N	1,210

*Source:* ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 8

**SPAIN (SEPTEMBER 2011). EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS FACING THE CRISIS**


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*WOULD YOU SAY THAT, IN GENERAL, THE ACTIONS OF EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS IN THE FACE OF THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS HAVE BEEN...?*

---

Very solidaristic	5.9
Quite solidaristic	27.2
Neither too much nor too little (DO NOT READ)	5.8
Not very solidaristic	46.6
Not at all solidaristic	14.4

---

*AND HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE ACTIONS OF EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS WHEN FACING THE ECONOMIC CRISIS?*

---

Very effective	3.0
Quite effective	13.0
About average (DO NOT READ)	3.8
Not very effective	59.2
Not at all effective	18.9
DK/NA	2.0
N	498

---

*DO YOU BELIEVE THE EU HAS SHOWN THAT IT IS CAPABLE OF COORDINATION TO EFFECTIVELY SOLVE A COMMON PROBLEM: THE PUBLIC DEBT CRISIS FACING SEVERAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES?*

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Yes	30.6
No	65.8
DK/NA	3.6
N	510

---

*Source: ASP survey 16.059.*

TABLE 9

**SPAIN (SEPTEMBER 2011). THE EU AND CONTROL OVER THE MEMBER STATES' ECONOMIC POLICIES**

*TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: "A STRONG EUROPEAN GOVERNMENT WITH POWERS TO CONTROL MEMBER STATES' ECONOMIC AND BUDGETARY POLICIES IS NECESSARY TO SAVE THE EURO"?*

Strongly agree	40.7
Somewhat agree	36.3
Neither agree nor disagree (DO NOT READ)	2.1
Somewhat disagree	12.3
Strongly disagree	7.1
DK/NA	1.5

*CONSIDERING THE COMMON INTEREST OF ALL EU COUNTRIES, IF ONE OF THEM IS UNABLE TO REDUCE ITS PUBLIC DEFICIT IN A REASONABLE TIMEFRAME, DO YOU BELIEVE THE EU SHOULD EXERCISE A CERTAIN DEGREE OF CONTROL OVER THAT COUNTRY'S PUBLIC BUDGET?*

Yes	81.4
No	15.7
DK/NA	3.0
N	498

Source: ASP survey 11.050.

TABLE 10

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). PERCEPTION OF THE KNOWLEDGE THE SPANISH HAVE OF THE SPANISH ECONOMY**

*WOULD YOU SAY THAT THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE THAT THE SPANISH HAVE IN GENERAL REGARDING HOW THE SPANISH ECONOMY WORKS IS...?*

Very high	2.9
Quite high	12.4
About average (DO NOT READ)	19.8
Quite low	42.2
Very low	20.7
DK/NA	2.0
N	1,210

Source: ASP survey 16.059.



TABLE 11

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). INFORMATION ON THE DECISIONS MADE BY EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS**

*IN GENERAL, HOW INFORMED ARE YOU REGARDING THE DELIBERATIONS OR DECISIONS OF EUROPEAN LEADERS  
IN INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL OR THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION?*

Very informed	2.5
Somewhat informed	17.1
About average (DO NOT READ)	6.5
Not very informed	56.4
Not at all informed	17.1
DK/NA	0.5
N	1,210

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 12

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). PERCEPTION OF THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF EUROPEAN HISTORY**

*IN GENERAL, HOW WOULD YOU QUALIFY THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE THE SPANISH HAVE OF THE HISTORY  
OF EUROPE?*

Very high	2.7
Somewhat high	9.2
About average (DO NOT READ)	8.9
Somewhat low	56.7
Very low	21.0
DK/NA	1.5
N	789

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 13

**SPAIN (SEPTEMBER 2011). EXTENDED STAY IN ANOTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRY**

*HAVE YOU EVER LIVED IN ANOTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRY FOR A PERIOD LONGER THAN SIX MONTHS?*

Yes	9.0
No	91.0
DK/NA	0.0
N	1,008

Source: ASP survey 11.050.

TABLE 14

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). KNOWLEDGE OF OTHER EUROPEAN LANGUAGES***DO YOU SPEAK ANOTHER EUROPEAN LANGUAGE FLUENTLY?*

Yes	26.5
No	73.5
N	1,210

*Source:* ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 15

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). CONFIDENCE IN A JOINT ACTION AGAINST JIHADIST TERRORISM***DO YOU BELIEVE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ACTING TOGETHER WILL EFFECTIVELY CONFRONT THE PROBLEM OF JIHADIST OR ISLAMIC TERRORISM IN THE NEAR FUTURE?*

Yes	64.7
No	32.1
DK/NA	3.3
N	789

*Source:* ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 16

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). DECISION ON REFUGEES***AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW, OVER THE LAST YEAR THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES FROM WAR TORN COUNTRIES SUCH AS SYRIA THAT WANT TO LIVE IN EUROPE HAS GROWN A LOT. WHEN IT COMES TO DECIDING ON ACCEPTING THESE REFUGEES, WHAT IS YOUR PREFERENCE?*

That each country decides on its own the number of refugees it wants to take in	46.1
That the majority of EU governments decide how many refugees each country must take in	47.6
Other option (DO NOT READ)	5.3
DK/NA	1.0
N	1,210

*Source:* ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 17

**SPAIN (SEPTEMBER 2009). CAPITALISM / THE MARKET ECONOMY AND POVERTY***TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?**CAPITALISM / THE MARKET ECONOMY IS THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM THAT HAS BEEN SHOWN TO BE MOST CAPABLE OF ERADICATING WORLD POVERTY*

	Capitalism	The market economy
Strongly agree	9.7	9.6
Somewhat agree	23.1	29.7
Neither agree nor disagree (DO NOT READ)	1.6	2.4
Somewhat disagree	38.3	36.1
Strongly disagree	25.1	18.6
DK/NA	2.3	3.6

*CAPITALISM / THE MARKET ECONOMY IS AN ECONOMIC SYSTEM THAT TENDS TO BRING WITH IT POVERTY FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION*

	Capitalism	The market economy
Strongly agree	17.5	9.6
Somewhat agree	29.3	29.5
Neither agree nor disagree (DO NOT READ)	2.8	4.0
Somewhat disagree	33.4	35.3
Strongly disagree	14.6	17.2
DK/NA	2.3	4.5
N	407	400

Source: ASP survey 09.047.

TABLE 18

**SPAIN (2009,2010, 2016). GENERAL PREFERENCES REGARDING THE ECONOMIC ORDER***IN YOUR OPINION, WHICH IS BETTER: A FREE MARKET ECONOMY OR AN ECONOMY RUN BY THE GOVERNMENT?*

	Sep. 2009	Sep. 2010	May 2016
A free market economy	64.3	62.5	59.5
An economy run by the government	23.8	24.9	24.7
Neither of the two (DO NOT READ)	5.9		3.7
DK/NA	6.0	12.6	12.2
N	807	811	603

Source: ASP surveys 09.047, 10.048 and 16.059.

TABLE 19

**SPAIN (2011, 2016). ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMMENDMENT MANDATING A BALANCED BUDGET**

*AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW, THE 2011 CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM MANDATES THAT ALL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS MAINTAIN ON AVERAGE, COUNTING YEARS OF CRISIS AND OF GROWTH, A BALANCE BETWEEN EXPENDITURE AND REVENUE. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS RULE?*

	Sep. 2011	May 2016
Strongly agree	29.6	22.9
Somewhat agree	30.4	38.3
Neither agree or nor disagree (DO NOT READ)	4.8	4.6
Somewhat disagree	19.6	20.3
Strongly disagree	13.2	11.3
DK/NA	2.4	2.7
N	1,008	789

Source: ASP surveys 11.050 and 16.059.

TABLE 20

**SPAIN (SEPTEMBER 2010). GOVERNMENTS AND THE MARKET IN SPAIN'S DEVELOPMENT**

*IN THE LAST FIFTY YEARS, THE PER CAPITA INCOME OF THE SPANISH HAS QUINTUPLED. WHAT DO YOU THINK HAS HAD THE MOST INFLUENCE ON THIS GROWTH?*

The economic policy of Spanish governments	16.8
The spontaneous development of Spanish and international markets	74.5
Other answers (DO NOT READ)	2.8
DK/NA	5.9
N	811

Source: ASP survey 10.048.

TABLE 21

**SPAIN (2009-2011). PREDICTIONS ON THE END OF THE CRISIS IN TERMS OF UNEMPLOYMENT**

*WHEN DO YOU THINK WE WILL RETURN TO AN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE SIMILAR TO THAT WHICH WAS COMMON IN THE TEN YEARS PRIOR TO THE CRISIS, ESTIMATED AT APPROXIMATELY 11%?*

	Average figure (in years) given by those answering	N
Sep. 2009	3.6	748
Sep. 2010	4.8	708
Sep. 2011	5.1	901

Source: ASP surveys 09.047, 10.048 and 11.050.

TABLE 22

**SPAIN (2009/2010-2016). ATTITUDES TOWARD POSSIBLE LABOR MARKET REFORMS***TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS....?*

	Sep. 2009	May 2016
TO FIGHT UNEMPLOYMENT, WE SHOULD MAKE IT CHEAPER FOR BUSINESS OWNERS TO HIRE WORKERS BY REDUCING THE SOCIAL SECURITY PAYMENTS THEY MUST MAKE		
Strongly agree	14.3	14.6
Somewhat agree	30.1	30.6
Neither agree nor disagree (DO NOT READ)	1.8	3.0
Somewhat disagree	28.9	20.2
Strongly disagree	23.4	29.2
DK/NA	1.5	2.4

*TO FIGHT UNEMPLOYMENT, WE SHOULD MAKE IT CHEAPER TO HIRE WORKERS BY REDUCING THE COSTS OF DISMISSALS*

Strongly agree	7.3	6.3
Somewhat agree	14.9	8.7
Neither agree nor disagree (DO NOT READ)	0.4	1.4
Somewhat disagree	30.6	24.7
Strongly disagree	44.9	58.1
DK/NA	2.0	0.8
N	807	603

*WHICH IS BETTER...?*

	Sep. 2010	May 2016
That collective bargaining adapts working conditions and wages to the characteristics of each company, or.....	27.4	28.6
That it establishes working conditions and wages that are equal or very similar for all workers in the same sector	68.0	67.8
DK/NA	4.6	3.6
N	811	607

*Source: ASP surveys 09.047, 10.048 and 16.059.*

TABLE 23

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). ATTITUDE TOWARD ESTABLISHING A UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME**

*WOULD YOU AGREE WITH THE STATE PROVIDING ALL SPANISH CITIZENS A MINIMUM INCOME, JUST FOR BEING CITIZENS AND INDEPENDENT OF AGE AND ECONOMIC SITUATION?*

Yes	50.8
No	47.8
DK/NA	1.3
N	1,210

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 24

**SPAIN (SEPTEMBER 2009). CAPITALISM AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS**

*WOULD YOU SAY THAT THE CURRENT GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS IS THE RESULT OF ABUSES WITHIN THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM, OR A FAILURE OF CAPITALISM ITSELF?*

Abuses within capitalism	58.9
Failure of capitalism itself	35.6
Neither	0.5
DK/NA	5.0
N	807

Source: ASP survey 09.047.

TABLE 25

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). DOES THE MARKET ECONOMY ERADICATE POVERTY OR DOES IT GENERATE IT?**

*WHICH OF THESE TWO STATEMENTS IS CLOSER TO YOUR WAY OF THINKING?*

The market economy is the economic system that has been shown to be most capable of eradicating world poverty, or...	39.1
The market economy is a system that often brings about poverty for the majority of the population	53.9
Neither of the two (DO NOT READ)	1.4
DK/NA	5.6
N	607

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 26

**SPAIN (2009, 2011, 2016). THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATE AND ITS CITIZENS***WITH WHICH OF THESE TWO STATEMENTS ARE YOU MORE IN AGREEMENT?*

	Sep. 2009	Sep. 2011	May 2016
The state is responsible for all citizens and should take care of those persons that have problems.	67.5	67.3	71.9
Citizens are responsible for their own welfare and they must take care of the situation themselves when they have problems.	19.4	18.3	17.6
Depends on circumstances (DO NOT READ)	12.1	13.2	9.6
DK/NA	1.0	1.2	0.8
N	807	1,008	789

*Source: ASP surveys 09.047, 10.048 and 16.059.*

TABLE 27

**SPAIN (SEPTEMBER 2009). ECONOMIC PROTECTIONISM***TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: THE LAW SHOULD PROTECT SPANISH PRODUCTS FROM COMPETITION WITH PRODUCTS FROM OTHER EU COUNTRIES?*

Strongly agree	39.6
Agree	40.1
Disagree	14.1
Strongly disagree	5.2
DK/NA	1.0
N	807

*Source: ASP survey 09.047.*

TABLE 28

**SPAIN (SEPTEMBER 2011). READJUSTMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY  
AS A MEANS TO REDUCE THE PUBLIC DEFICIT**

*CURRENTLY, VARIOUS MEASURES ARE BEING DISCUSSED TO REDUCE THE PUBLIC DEFICIT AND PUBLIC DEBT IN SPAIN. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING PROPOSED ACTION?: "REDUCING GOVERNMENT POWERS AT ALL LEVELS SO THAT CIVIL SOCIETY AND BUSINESSES CAN TAKE ON MORE RESPONSIBILITIES"*

Strongly agree	23.6
Somewhat agree	35.4
Neither agree nor disagree (DO NOT READ)	3.1
Somewhat disagree	20.8
Strongly disagree	11.4
DK/NA	5.7
N	510

Source: ASP survey 11.050.

TABLE 29

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). PREFERENCE FOR LIVING IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

*IN WHAT FOLLOWS, I WILL READ A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF A PERSON. PLEASE TELL ME HOW MUCH THIS PERSON IS OR IS NOT LIKE YOU: "FOR THIS PERSON, IT IS IMPORTANT TO LIVE IN SECURE SURROUNDINGS. HE/SHE AVOIDS ANYTHING THAT MIGHT ENDANGER HIS/HER SAFETY"*

Very much like me	45.9
Somewhat like me	31.1
A little like me	15.9
Not like me at all	6.6
DK/NA	0.5
N	789

Source: ASP survey 16.059.



TABLE 30

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). THE OBJECTIVE OF POLITICS: THE OPPOSITION BETWEEN THE "POWER" OF THE COUNTRY AND THE WELL-BEING OF ITS PEOPLE**

<i>WHAT SHOULD BE MORE IMPORTANT IN POLITICS?</i>	
That a country acquires more wealth and influence in the world, or...	11.6
That its people have a better life and more free time	84.1
Neither of the two (DO NOT READ)	1.5
DK/NA	2.7
N	603
<i>WHAT SHOULD A THE POLITICIANS IN A COUNTRY FOCUS THEIR ATTENTION ON?</i>	
Above all, on increasing per capita income and the influence of the country in international affairs, or...	35.9
Above all, on increasing the population's free time and level of education?	57.0
Neither of the two (DO NOT READ)	3.5
DK/NA	3.6
N	607

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 31

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). TYPES OF SOCIETIES: THE BALANCE BETWEEN INNOVATION AND EQUALITY**

<i>PLEASE IMAGINE TWO TYPES OF SOCIETIES, ONE MORE INNOVATIVE BUT LESS EGALITARIAN, AND ANOTHER MORE EGALITARIAN BUT LESS INNOVATIVE. IN WHICH WOULD YOU PREFER TO LIVE?</i>	
More innovative but less egalitarian	30.0
More egalitarian but less innovative	67.5
DK/NA	2.6
N	607

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 32

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). EXPECTATIONS REGARDING THE FUTURE RELEVANCE OF SPAIN AS THE MAIN FRAME OF REFERENCE IN THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE SPANISH**

*THINKING OF THE NEXT TEN YEARS AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THAT THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE SPANISH CAN HAVE THREE FRAMES OF REFERENCE (SPAIN, THE AUTONOMOUS REGION OF RESIDENCY AND EUROPE), DO YOU THINK THAT SPAIN WILL BE THE MAIN REFERENCE IN THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE SPANISH MORE THAN IT IS NOW, THE SAME AS IT IS NOW, OR LESS THAN IT IS NOW?*

More than now	20.4
The same as now	53.1
Less than now	22.2
DK/NA	4.3
N	789

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 33

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). THE CAPACITY OF THE SPANISH STATE IN THE NEAR FUTURE**

*DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE CAPACITY OF THE SPANISH STATE, THAT IS, THE ENSEMBLE OF CENTRAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS, TO SOLVE THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS WILL INCREASE, WILL REMAIN THE SAME OR WILL DECLINE IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?*

It will increase	31.5
It will remain the same	41.6
It will decline	18.9
DK/NA	8.1

*AND IN THOSE SAME FIVE YEARS, DO YOU BELIEVE THE CAPACITY OF THE SPANISH STATE, THAT IS, THE ENSEMBLE OF CENTRAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS, TO GUARANTEE THE UNITY OF THE SPANISH WILL INCREASE, WILL REMAIN THE SAME OR WILL DECLINE?*

It will increase	25.0
It will remain the same	44.2
It will decline	23.3
DK/NA	7.5

*ALSO IN FIVE YEARS, WHAT WILL HAPPEN WITH THE CAPACITY OF THE STATE TO REFLECT THE OPINIONS AND INTERESTS OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF SPANISH CITIZENS?*

It will increase	29.6
It will remain the same	45.5
It will decline	18.6
DK/NA	6.3
N	1,210

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 34

**SPAIN (2011, 2016). PREFERENCES REGARDING DIFFERENT FORMS OF THE TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE STATE**

*I AM GOING TO READ OUT A LIST OF ALTERNATIVE FORMULAS FOR THE TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE STATE IN SPAIN. PLEASE TELL ME WHICH YOU MOST AGREE WITH.*

	Sep. 2011	May 2016
A state with a single central government and no autonomous regional governments	21.4	19.1
A state in which autonomous regions have less autonomy than they do currently	26.2	16.3
A state with autonomous regions just as it is currently	21.5	23.6
A state in which autonomous regions have greater autonomy than they do currently	13.7	22.8
A state in which the possibility of autonomous regions becoming independent states is recognized	13.8	16.5
Another option (DO NOT READ)	1.9	
DK/NA	1.5	1.8
N	1,008	1,210

Source: ASP surveys 11.050 and 16.059.

TABLE 35

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). IDENTITIES**

*WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOU FEEL...? (\*)*

	Total	Castile and Leon	Valencian C.	Madrid	Rest of Spain	Andalusia	Galicia	Catalonia	Basque Country
Only Spanish	16.3	22.7	16.9	25.9	15.3	13.4	12.2	12.6	13.8
More Spanish than Basque, Catalan...	9.1	13.6	12.3	12.7	10.5	8.3	4.1	5.2	0.0
As Spanish as Basque, Catalan...	52.4	53.0	59.2	46.4	57.6	60.2	52.7	41.4	32.8
More Basque, Catalan... than Spanish	13.0	0.0	5.4	7.2	9.9	12.0	27.0	22.5	32.8
Only Basque, Catalan...	6.4	4.5	1.5	4.8	3.8	4.6	4.1	14.7	20.7
Other (DO NOT READ)	2.3	0.0	4.6	2.4	2.5	1.4	0.0	3.7	0.0
DK/NA	0.5	6.1	0.0	0.6	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Predominantly Spanish identity	25.3	36.4	29.2	38.6	25.8	21.8	16.2	17.8	13.8
Predominantly regional identity	19.4	4.5	6.9	12.0	13.7	16.7	31.1	37.2	53.4
Mixed identities	74.5	66.7	76.9	66.3	78.0	80.6	83.8	69.1	65.5
N	1,215	66	130	166	314	216	74	191	58

Note: (\*) The autonomous regions are ordered based on the percentage of those who predominantly feel a regional identity, from lowest to highest. I have only included, as examples, the regions with the greatest numbers of cases.

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 36

**SPAIN (2011, 2016). THE PEOPLE AND THE ELITES IN THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING NATIONALISMS**

*IN RELATION TO CONTROVERSIES IN SPAIN REGARDING AUTONOMY, NATIONALISMS, ETC., WITH WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS DO YOU MOST AGREE?*

	Sep. 2011	May 2016
The majority of the people would tend to reach agreement, but political leaders tend to promote conflict	71.9	71.4
The majority of the people have such strong nationalist sentiments, that the politicians that represent them cannot avoid conflict even if they want to.	21.3	21.2
Neither (DO NOT READ)	2.6	2.6
DK/NA	4.2	4.8
N	1,008	607

Source: ASP surveys 11.050 and 16.059.

TABLE 37

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). IMPACT ON SPAIN OF CATALONIA'S HYPOTHETICAL INDEPENDENCE**

*SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE CATALONIA'S INDEPENDENCE IS SOMETHING THAT SPAIN COULD ADJUST TO IN A FEW YEARS WITHOUT TOO MANY PROBLEMS, WHILE OTHERS BELIEVE IT WOULD BE A HISTORICAL FAILURE FROM WHICH SPAIN WOULD TAKE A LONG TIME TO RECOVER. TO WHICH OF THESE TWO PERSPECTIVES ARE YOU CLOSER?*

Adjust in a few years	32.4
Historical failure	60.7
Neither (DO NOT READ)	3.4
DK/NA	3.5
N	603

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 38

**SPAIN (2011, 2016). EXPECTATIONS REGARDING A HYPOTHETICAL REFERENDUM FOR SELF-DETERMINATION IN CATALONIA**

*IF CATALONIA HELD A REFERENDUM FOR SELF-DETERINATION, WHO DO YOU THINK WOULD WIN?*

	Sep. 2011	May 2016
Those in favor of Independence	38.5	16.9
Those that want to remain part of Spain	53.4	69.1
Tie (DO NOT READ)	1.7	5.8
DK/NA	6.4	8.1
N	510	789

Source: ASP surveys 11.050 and 16.059.

TABLE 39

**SPAIN (2011, 2016). ATTITUDES TOWARD ALLOWING AUTONOMOUS REGIONS TO HOLD REFERENDUMS FOR SELF-DETERMINATION**

*IF A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT WERE PROPOSED ALLOWING CITIZENS OF AN AUTONOMOUS REGION TO VOTE IN A REFERENDUM DETERMINING IF THEY WANT TO CONTINUE BEING A PART OF SPAIN OR NOT, WOULD YOU BE...?*

For that amendment	44.5
Against that amendment	52.5
DK/NA	3.0
N	498

*DO YOU THINK THE CONSTITUTION SHOULD BE REFORMED TO ALLOW SPANISH CITIZENS IN CERTAIN AUTONOMOUS REGIONS TO VOTE IN REFERENDUMS ON WHETHER THEY WANT TO REMAIN A PART OF SPAIN OR BECOME INDEPENDENT?*

Yes	39.3
No	58.2
DK/NA	2.5
N	607

Source: ASP surveys 11.050 and 16.059.

TABLE 40

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). ATTITUDE TOWARDS A CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM THAT WOULD CREATE A FEDERAL STATE**

*DO YOU THINK THERE SHOULD BE A CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM TO ALLOW AUTONOMOUS REGIONS TO BECOME STATES WITHIN SPAIN, WITH SPAIN BECOMING A FEDERAL STATE LIKE THE UNITED STATES OR GERMANY?*

Yes	40.2
No	53.5
DK/NA	6.3
N	603

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 41

**SPAIN (2010, 2016). ATTACKING ADVERSARIES TO DISTRACT ATTENTION**

*TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: "MANY POLITICIANS, OF ALL TENDENCIES, TEND TO DISCREDIT THEIR ADVERSARIES TO DIVERT THE PUBLIC'S ATTENTION FROM THE FACT THAT, IN REALITY, THEY ARE INCAPABLE OF SOLVING THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS" (\*)*

	Sep. 2010	May 2016
Strongly agree	63.4	59.0
Somewhat agree	25.0	24.3
Somewhat disagree	6.1	7.3
Strongly disagree	4.3	8.0
DK/NA	1.2	1.4
N	811	603

(\*) In September 2010: "capable of resolving the crisis".

Source: ASP surveys 10.050 and 16.059.

TABLE 42

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). EXAGGERATING HOSTILITY TOWARDS OPPONENTS AS A TOOL TO AVOID COMPROMISE**

*TO WHAT EXTENT TO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: "MANY POLITICIANS TRY TO INTENSIFY THE FEELINGS OF HOSTILITY OF THEIR SOCIAL BASE TOWARD OPPOSITION PARTIES TO MAKE COMPROMISE WITH THEM IMPOSSIBLE"*

Strongly agree	32.5
Somewhat agree	30.7
Somewhat disagree	19.1
Strongly disagree	14.7
DK/NA	3.0
N	607

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 43

**SPAIN (2010, 2016). IMPLICATIONS OF THE ATTENTION PAID TO THE POSITIONS OF POLITICAL OPPONENTS**

*WOULD YOU SAY THAT, IN GENERAL, WHEN POLITICIANS LISTEN TO THE POINTS OF VIEW OF POLITICIANS FROM OTHER PARTIES, THEY TEND TO BE OPEN TO INCORPORATING THEIR MOST REASONABLE IDEAS OR THEY ONLY LISTEN TO THEM SO AS TO BETTER REFUTE THEIR ARGUMENTS? (\*)*

	Sep. 2010	May 2016
Open to incorporating reasonable ideas	15.3	5.4
They listen to refute	75.8	89.1
Neither (DO NOT READ)	3.7	3.1
DK/NA	5.2	2.4
N	407	603

(\*) In 2010 the question referenced "the political party to which you are closest".

Source: ASP surveys 10.050 and 16.059.

TABLE 44

**SPAIN (2009, 2010, 2016). THE VALIDITY OF THE CONCEPTS OF 'LEFT' AND 'RIGHT' IN POLITICS**

*WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING TWO STATEMENTS DO YOU AGREE WITH?*

	Sep. 2009	Sep. 2010	May 2016
The notions of left and right are outdated: they are no longer useful to evaluate the positions taken by politicians and political parties	43.4	40.7	39.1
The notions of right and left are still valid for evaluating the positions taken by the parties and politicians	49.1	52.3	53.3
DK/NA	7.5	7.0	7.6
N	807	407	789

Source: ASP surveys 09.047, 10.048 and 16.056.

TABLE 45

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). SELF-POSITIONING ON THE LEFT-RIGHT SCALE**

*WHEN THINKING ABOUT YOUR POLITICAL POSITIONS, ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 7, WITH 1 BEING FURTHEST TO THE LEFT AND 7 BEING FURTHEST TO THE RIGHT, WHERE WOULD YOU PLACE YOURSELF?*

1	10.4
2	8.7
3	25.4
4	23.2
5	17.6
6	3.9
7	6.1
DK/NA	4.7
N	1,210

Source: ASP survey 16.056.

TABLE 46

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). PUBLIC DEBATE AS A COMPARISON OF CONTRASTING OPINIONS OR AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SHARED LEARNING**

*HOW SHOULD PUBLIC DEBATE WORK?*

As a discussion in which different perspectives can be clearly distinguished, or...	14.2
As a discussion in which everyone has the opportunity to contribute something and to learn	83.8
Neither of the two (DO NOT READ)	0.9
DK/NA	1.1
N	1,210

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 47

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). HOW SHOULD POLITICAL PARTIES MAKE DECISIONS?**

*TELL ME, WHAT SHOULD BE MORE IMPORTANT IN POLITICAL LIFE...*

That political parties deliberate, negotiate and compromise, or...	72.3
That political parties obtain the majority necessary to make decisions as quickly as possible	26.0
Neither of the two (DO NOT READ)	0.9
DK/NA	0.8
N	1,210

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 48

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). THINGS LEARNED SINCE THE DECEMBER 20 ELECTIONS**

*IN THE TIME THAT HAS PASSED SINCE THE DECEMBER 20 GENERAL ELECTION, DO YOU FEEL THE BEHAVIOR OF THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES HAS MADE YOU BETTER UNDERSTAND...*

	How political parties work?	Spain's problems and the possible solutions to those problems?
Yes	39.9	21.5
No	58.2	76.5
DK/NA	1.9	2.0
N	603	607

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 49

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). POLITICIANS WITH VISION AND ENERGY OR WITH MORAL SENSE AND COMMON SENSE**

*IN CURRENT CONDITIONS, IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN TWO TYPES OF POLITICIANS FOR A COUNTRY LIKE SPAIN, WHICH WOULD YOU PREFER?*

That they have a great vision and energy to carry it out	18.6
That they have moral sense and common sense	77.2
Neither of the two (DO NOT READ)	2.2
DK/NA	2.1
N	603

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 50

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). PERSONAL PROJECTS AND THE WELL-BEING OF OTHERS**

*WHICH OF THESE TWO OPINIONS IS CLOSER TO WHAT YOU THINK?*

The most important thing in life is to carry out a personal project, although in the process you may ignore to some extent the well-being of others	20.7
It often makes sense to renounce our personal projects for the good of others	76.4
Neither of the two (DO NOT READ)	1.4
DK/NA	1.6
N	789

Source: ASP survey 16.059.



TABLE 51

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). POLITICIANS AND COMMON PEOPLE**

*TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: "POLITICIANS DO NOT WORRY MUCH ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE LIKE ME THINK"*

Strongly agree	41.8
Somewhat agree	35.5
Somewhat disagree	13.4
Strongly disagree	8.6
DK/NA	0.7
N	789

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 52

**SPAIN (SEPTEMBER 2010). THE MOTIVATION OF POLITICIANS TO SOLVE THE CRISIS**

*TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: "MANY POLITICIANS OF ALL TENDENCIES ARE VERY MOTIVATED TO SOLVE THE CRISIS BECAUSE THEY SUFFER ITS CONSEQUENCES IN THEIR PERSONAL LIVES"*

Strongly agree	9.5
Somewhat agree	13.2
Somewhat disagree	27.1
Strongly disagree	49.3
DK/NA	0.8
N	811

Source: ASP survey 10.048.

TABLE 53

**SPAIN (SEPTEMBER 2010). CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERNAL DEBATES IN POLITICAL PARTIES**

*THINK ABOUT THE PARTY YOU IDENTIFY MOST CLOSELY WITH. IN ITS INTERNAL DEBATES, DO PEOPLE PARTICIPATE AND DEBATE IDEAS OPENLY OR DO THEY TEND TO ACCEPT THE DIRECTIVES OF THEIR LEADERS ALMOST WITHOUT DISCUSSION?*

They debate openly	22.7
They follow directives	69.2
I don't identify with any political party (DO NOT READ)	4.7
DK/NA	3.5
N	404

Source: ASP survey 10.050.

TABLE 54

**SPAIN (SEPTEMBER 2009). THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES: ADVERSARIES OR ENEMIES?**

*CONSIDER THE TWO MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES IN SPAIN, THE PSOE AND THE PP. DO YOU BELIEVE THEY TREAT EACH OTHER MORE LIKE POLITICAL ADVERSARIES OR MORE LIKE ACTUAL ENEMIES?*

Adversaries	29.5
Enemies	68.6
It depends on the party (DO NOT READ)	0.4
DK/NA	1.4
N	807

Source: ASP survey 09.047.

TABLE 55

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). PERSONAL PREDISPOSITION TO TALK ABOUT POLITICS WITH PEOPLE THAT HOLD DIFFERENT VIEWS**

*TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT REFLECT HOW YOU USUALLY BEHAVE: "WHEN TALKING ABOUT POLITICS, I TEND TO AVOID CONVERSING WITH PEOPLE THAT HAVE DIFFERENT VIEWS FROM MINE AND I CONVERSE WITH THOSE THAT HAVE VIEWS SIMILAR TO MINE"*

A lot	11.0
Somewhat	19.4
Neither a lot nor a little (DO NOT READ)	2.2
Little	27.9
Not at all	37.0
DK/NA	2.5
N	607

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 56

**SPAIN (SEPTEMBER 2010). PREDISPOSITION OF OTHERS TO TALK ABOUT POLITICS WITH PEOPLE THAT HOLD DIFFERENT**

*TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT?: "WHEN THEY TALK ABOUT POLITICS, PEOPLE TEND TO AVOID CONVERSATIONS WITH PERSONS WITH DIFFERENT POLITICAL VIEWS AND TO CONVERSE WITH THOSE WHO THINK IN A SIMILAR MANNER"*

Strongly agree	37.6
Somewhat agree	32.2
Somewhat disagree	16.6
Strongly disagree	11.9
DK/NA	1.7
N	811

Source: ASP survey 10.050.

TABLE 57

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). DIFFICULTY IN UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE ECONOMY,  
OR NOT THAT MUCH DIFFICULTY**

*DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE COMPLEXITY OF THE ECONOMY IS INCREASING AND BECOMING MORE DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND, OR THAT, IN REALITY, ALTHOUGH IT MAY BE MORE COMPLEX, WITH COMMON SENSE AND SOME INFORMATION THE ESSENTIAL CAN BE UNDERSTOOD?*

It's more difficult to understand	44.6
The essential can be understood	52.7
Neither of the two (DO NOT READ)	0.3
DK/NA	2.5
N	1,210

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 58

**SPAIN (SEPTEMBER 2009). POSSIBILITIES TO LEARN ABOUT THE ECONOMY IN THE AFTERMATH  
OF THE CRISIS**

*ONCE THE CURRENT CRISIS IS OVER, WILL THE PUBLIC'S GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF ECONOMIC PROBLEMS HAVE IMPROVED OR WILL IT HAVE WORSENE?*

Improved	78.6
Remain the same (DO NOT READ)	6.2
Worsened	10.7
DK/NA	4.6
N	807

Source: ASP survey 09.047.

TABLE 59

**SPAIN (SEPTEMBER 2010). USEFULNESS OF THE CURRENT CRISIS IN PREVENTING FUTURE CRISES**

*TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT?: "UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT CRISIS WILL HAVE SOME USE, BUT NOT MUCH, IN PREVENTING FUTURE CRISES, BECAUSE THE ECONOMY IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY COMPLEX?"*

Strongly agree	20.4
Somewhat agree	37.1
Somewhat disagree	26.9
Strongly disagree	14.1
DK/NA	1.4
N	811

Source: ASP survey 10.048.

TABLE 60

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). PERCEPTION OF THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF SPANISH HISTORY***HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE KNOWLEDGE THE SPANISH HAVE IN GENERAL OF THE HISTORY OF SPAIN?*

Very high	3.1
Somewhat high	18.8
Average, or something like that (DO NOT READ)	10.6
Somewhat low	47.9
Very low	18.5
DK/NA	1.1
N	603

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 61

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). PRIDE OVER SPAIN'S RECENT HISTORY***PLEASE THINK OF THE STAGE OF HISTORY IN SPAIN FROM THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION TO TODAY. DO YOU BELIEVE WE CAN FEEL VERY PROUD, QUITE PROUD, A LITTLE PROUD OR NOT PROUD AT ALL OF THIS STAGE?*

Very proud	18.2
Quite proud	34.1
Neither proud nor not proud (DO NOT READ)	5.2
Little proud	28.7
Not proud at all	12.5
DK/NA	1.3
N	607

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 62

**SPAIN (SEPTEMBER 2011). PRIDE OVER THE ADVANCES OF THE LAST THIRTY YEARS***PLEASE TELL ME TO WHAT EXTENT YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: "THE SPANISH CAN FEEL PROUD OF WHAT WE HAVE DONE TOGETHER IN THE LAST THIRTY YEARS"*

Strongly agree	48.8
Somewhat agree	30.1
Neither proud nor not proud (DO NOT READ)	4.1
Somewhat disagree	12.5
Strongly disagree	4.3
DK/NA	0.2
N	510

Source: ASP survey 11.050.

TABLE 63

**SPAIN (2010, 2011, 2016). INTEREST IN POLITICS***DO POLITICS INTEREST YOU A LOT, QUITE A BIT, NOT MUCH, OR NOT AT ALL?*

	Sep. 2010	Sep. 2011	May 2016
A lot	8.2	10.9	14.9
Quite a bit	33.1	31.4	35.7
Not much	37.7	38.2	29.0
Not at all	20.8	19.2	19.9
DK/NA	0.2	0.4	0.4
N	811	1,008	1,210

Source: ASP surveys 10.048, 11.050 and 16.059.

TABLE 64

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). CONSUMPTION OF POLITICAL INFORMATION AND COMMENTARY***PLEASE CONSIDER HOW MUCH TIME YOU DEDICATE EACH DAY TO FOLLOWING INFORMATION, NEWS AND COMMENTARY ON POLITICS ON THE TELEVISION, RADIO, IN THE NEWSPAPERS OR ON THE INTERNET. HOW MUCH TIME ON AVERAGE WOULD YOU SAY YOU SPEND?*

Less than five minutes	7.5
Between five and fifteen minutes	12.8
Between fifteen minutes and half an hour	19.1
Between half an hour and an hour	29.4
More than an hour	31.1
DK/NA	0.2
N	1,210

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 65

**SPAIN (2010, 2011, 2016). PERCEPTIONS OF THE QUALITY OF INFORMATION OFFERED BY THE MEDIA***GENERALLY SPEAKING, WOULD YOU SAY THE MEDIA INFORMS ABOUT THE CRISIS / POLITICAL AFFAIRS IN A CLEAR AND ORDERLY MANNER, OR IN A DISORDERLY OR CONFUSING MANNER?*

	About the crisis Sep. 2010	About political affairs Sep. 2011	May 2016
Clear and orderly	28.4	25.4	24.1
Disorderly and confusing	68.1	72.9	72.2
DK/NA	3.5	1.7	3.7
N	404	498	789

Source: ASP surveys 10.048, 11.050 and 16.059.

TABLE 66

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). BELONGING TO SEVERAL TYPES OF VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS**

*DO YOU BELONG TO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING GROUPS OR ASSOCIATIONS? ARE YOU VERY ACTIVE IN THAT GROUP, NOT VERY ACTIVE, OR ONLY MAKE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO SAID GROUP?*

	Belongs and does not participate actively	Belongs but only contributes economically	Belongs and participates actively	Does not belong
A union, a business association, or a professional association	2.9	7.2	8.2	81.8
A church or other religious organization	3.7	5.6	2.5	88.2
A sport group, a cultural group or a recreational group of some sort	14.6	6.5	2.2	76.7
A social support or human rights organization	3.1	3.1	16.0	77.8
An association or group not included in the above categories	3.5	2.8	2.5	91.1
TOTAL				
	Belongs to an association and is very active	Belongs to an association but is not very active	Belongs to an association but only pays membership fees	Does not belong to an association
Belonging to voluntary associations N = 1,210.	23.3	16.8	13.7	46.1

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 67

**SPAIN (MAY 2016). (PERCEIVED AND DESIRED) INFLUENCE OF VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS  
ON SOLVING SOCIAL PROBLEMS**

*WHAT INFLUENCE WOULD YOU SAY VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS OF ALL TYPES, SUCH AS NGOS AND OTHER SIMILAR  
INSTITUTIONS HAVE IN SOLVING THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS?*

A lot	3.3
Quite a bit	14.9
Neither a lot nor a little (DO NOT READ)	2.5
Little	61.3
None	14.0
DK/NA	4.0

*LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE, SHOULD THAT INFLUENCE BE A LOT GREATER, SOMEWHAT GREATER, SOMEWHAT  
LESS OR A LOT LESS?*

A lot greater	23.1
Somewhat greater	58.6
The same as now (DO NOT READ)	5.7
Somewhat less	5.3
A lot less	3.2
DK/NA	4.0
N	1,210

Source: ASP survey 16.059.

TABLE 68

**SPAIN (2009, 2016). GENERAL SOCIAL TRUST**

*GENERALLY SPEAKING, WOULD YOU SAY THAT MOST PEOPLE CAN BE TRUSTED OR THAT YOU CAN'T BE TOO  
CAREFUL IN DEALING WITH PEOPLE?*

	Sep. 2009	May 2016
Most people can be trusted	37.2	36.0
You can't be too careful in dealing with people	61.1	62.2
DK/NA	1.7	1.8
N	807	789

Source: ASP surveys 09.047 and 16.059.

TABLE 69

**SPAIN (2010, 2011, 2016). ATTITUDE OF THE SPANISH TOWARD WORK**

*GENERALLY SPEAKING, WOULD YOU SAY THAT THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE IN SPAIN TRY TO DO THEIR JOB VERY WELL, OR THEY JUST DO THE MINIMUM THAT'S NEEDED?*

	Sep. 2010	Sep. 2011	May 2016
They try to do their job very well	26.0	36.3	33.4
They only do the minimum that's needed	69.0	55.0	61.5
Other (DO NOT READ)	2.5	7.1	3.4
DK/NA	2.4	1.7	1.7
N	811	498	393

Source: ASP surveys 10.048, 11.050 and 16.059.

TABLE 70

**SPAIN (2010, 2016). THE SPANISH AND RECOGNITION OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF OTHERS**

*WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS BEST DESCRIBES WHAT HAPPENS IN SPAIN?*

	Sep. 2010	May 2016	
The efforts of others are recognized and rewarded with success	18.6	18.5	Work well done is usually recognized and rewarded with success
The success of others raises suspicion and is usually not recognized, despite the effort that may be involved	76.7	75.8	Work well done is often met with silence or indifference
Other response (DO NOT READ)	1.1	4.4	Other response (DO NOT READ)
DK/NA	3.5	1.4	DK/NA
N	811	396	

Source: ASP surveys 10.048 and 16.059.







## **APPENDIX 2**

### **TECHNICAL FORM OF ASP SURVEY 16.059**



- **SCOPE.** The Spanish peninsula, the Balearic Islands and the Canary Islands.
- **POPULATION.** Individuals 18 years of age or greater residing in Spain.
- **INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE.** Computer assisted telephone interview, with 35% of interviews taking place over cell phones.
- **SAMPLE SIZE.** Sample of 1,210 interviews. Some questions were asked of one half of the sample. The questionnaire used for cell phone interviews was shorter.
- **SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE.**

- **Landlines (in three phases):**

1<sup>st</sup> phase. Municipality: random selection with probability proportional to its size.

2<sup>nd</sup> phase. Household: random selection using the Iris Data directory, recodified and complemented by IMOP.

3<sup>rd</sup> phase. Interview: with quota control by sex, age and region (Madrid, Andalusia, Catalonia and all others).

- **Cell phones:** Simple random selection using the database of cell phone numbers generated by IMOP.
- **SAMPLE ERROR.** For the assumption of  $P = Q = 50\%$  and for a confidence level of 95%, the sampling error is  $\pm 2.9\%$  for the total sample,  $\pm 4.1\%$  for the questions asked of half the sample, and  $\pm 3.6\%$  for questions made exclusively to landlines.
- **FIELD WORK.** Carried out by a team of 12 interviewers from the IMOP Surveys fieldwork team, between May 17<sup>th</sup> and May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

- **WEIGHTING OF THE DATA.** The data that is presented is not the raw data, rather it has been submitted to a weighting process using the following matrix: "Sex by age" (12 groups), autonomous region (Andalusia, Catalonia, Madrid, Valencian Community, Basque Country, the rest), municipality population (5 levels), telephone type (only landline, only cell phone, landline and cell phone), nationality (Spanish, foreigner). In this way we correct any imbalances that may have been introduced by the field work.

The technical details for the other surveys by Analistas Socio-Políticos referred to in the text (all of them sponsored by FUNCAS) can be found in the following publications: ASP surveys 09.047 and 10.048, in Pérez-Díaz and Rodríguez (2010: 231-232); ASP survey 11.050, in Pérez-Díaz, Mezo and Rodríguez (2012: 203-206).

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