Catalonia

A study of nationalism and national identity in Catalonia

Bachelor’s project in South European Studies

by

Tina Alsted Grejsen

Project supervisor: Bente Mosgaard Jørgensen

Aarhus School of Business and Social Sciences, University of Aarhus

May 5, 2011

No. of characters: 55.931
# Table of content

1. Introduction ............................................................................................................................................. 3
   1.2 Method ................................................................................................................................................. 4
       1.2.2. Delimitation ................................................................................................................................. 4
2. The theoretical approach ......................................................................................................................... 5
3. Historical and political aspects to Catalan nationalism ............................................................................. 7
   3.1 Political Catalanism ............................................................................................................................... 7
   3.2 Military dictatorship ............................................................................................................................... 8
   3.3 Regaining of autonomy, the Spanish Civil War and Franco ............................................................... 8
   3.4 Resistance during the Franco regime .................................................................................................... 9
   3.5 Catalonia in a democratic sphere .......................................................................................................... 9
   3.6 Convergencia i Unió – CiU ................................................................................................................... 10
   3.7 Partits dels Socialistes de Catalunya – PSC ...................................................................................... 10
4. Analysis of historical and political Catalanism ......................................................................................... 11
   4.1. Cultural symbols in political patterns ............................................................................................... 12
   4.2 Catalonia in the international scope .................................................................................................... 12
       4.2.1 Dispute over revised Statute of Autonomy in 2006 .................................................................... 13
5. Cultural artefacts and symbols of national identity in Catalonia ............................................................. 14
   5.1 Language as the most important uniting point for Catalan identity .................................................. 15
       5.1.1 Language and group theory ......................................................................................................... 15
       5.1.2 Bilingualism and assimilation .................................................................................................... 15
       5.1.3 Language and security ................................................................................................................ 16
       5.1.4. Language and hegemony ........................................................................................................... 16
   5.2. The Catalan national dance; the Sardana ........................................................................................ 17
       5.2.1. The Sardana and resistance identity ......................................................................................... 17
       5.2.2. The Sardana and assimilation .................................................................................................. 17
6. Other artefacts of Catalan nationalism ..................................................................................................... 18
   6.1. La Diada – the national holiday and resistance identity .................................................................... 19
   6.2 F.C.Barcelona (FCB) ........................................................................................................................ 19
   6.3 Shared memory-loss? ....................................................................................................................... 19
7. Contemporary threat to the Catalan national identity ............................................................................. 20
   7.1 The concern of the immigrants in Catalonia .................................................................................... 20
   7.2. Is assimilation policy exclusive? ..................................................................................................... 21
1. Introduction

In the framework of creating supranational institutions such as the European Union (EU) and in the process of globalisation, the interesting development has been the strengthening of local, regional and national identities. The availability of wide identities can be argued to be more present than ever before in history and within the EU the member states are increasingly transferring their sovereignty to the instructional structure of the entity. At the same time, nationalism and national identities seem to be flourishing in the nations of Europe.

Within the Spanish state, the struggle for strong national autonomy has long been the case, especially for Catalonia. The recognition of Catalonia as a nation can be argued not to be the case for most of Europe’s citizens. Not because recognition is unacceptable, rather as it is mostly considered as being a region within the country of Spain. Catalonia’s unknown reality might be a result of the success of the Spanish state, which for centuries attempted to eliminate the multiregional nationalities of Spain in order to create a unified nationality.

The history of Catalonia with the numerous efforts for cultural homogenisation from its host state Spain seems to have strengthened the Catalan national identity. An identity which has managed to survive through these periods of severe suppression and the symbols of which are flourishing in the Catalan society; the use of the Catalan language in the education system, in politics and in the public and private life of Catalonia together with other national identity symbols such as the national dance, the Sardana. The strong sense of a common past and a shared identity are realities of contemporary Catalonia.

Likewise, the self-government in Catalonia and its political parties have been, and still are, dominated by nationalistic demands and continue to make attempts for further autonomy and culture strengthening. At the same time, the nation has been very outward looking to Europe and the membership of the EU was of great joy for the Catalans.

In addition, the main focus points in this paper are Catalan nationalism and national identity in Catalonia. The characteristics of and threats to the Catalan national identity will be studied by looking into the political and cultural history of Catalonia. This is done in order to understand why the nation is fighting for deeper political autonomy and to preserve its culture. Also, the nation’s cultural artefacts will be examined with the purpose of illustrating the features of Catalan national identity and to demonstrate how the nation defines itself. Throughout this paper, I will make use of historical, political and cultural aspects of Catalonia and attempt to analyse these focus point with my theoretical framework (described in section 2) in order to illustrate which elements that are the strongest in Catalan national identity, how these come into play politically, and what the consequences of these elements are.
1.2 Method

In the following, I will briefly account for how I have dealt with my project.

Throughout my thesis an analysis of national identity in Catalonia is provided based on a Catalan historical, political and cultural context. As I have made the Catalan society the base for my analysis and studied the actor (the Catalan society) and its action. I have dealt with positivism and sociology. Sociology is knowledge about the modern society and positivism highlights the collective ideas of a society such as values and origin (Langergaard, et. al, 2006). Further, I have attempted to understand the actions carried out by my actor (its rationality) by studying its history and contemporary situation. According to Max Weber, rationality of an action can be by achieving a goal (purpose rationality) or by acting in terms of some principles that are valuable for the actor e.g. political values (value rationality), (Langergaard, et.al, 2006). In addition, the political analysis provided in my project will illustrate the political values (value rationality) determining the reasons for a strong sense of national identification. Likewise, the purpose rationality is revealed in the political analysis, as the goal of promoting and acting upon political values has the purpose of providing Catalonia with increased autonomy.

Further, the term reliability indicates that when several analysists derive at the same result; the result has high reliability. In my project, the empiricism that I have worked with was based on work from several analysists and their theoretical work. As these have indicated the same observations about the Catalan society, it thus makes my project more reliable. Nonetheless, as I have based my examination on empiricism, I have concluded via induction, as I have not carried out e.g. interviews. As I have not based my project on ‘real facts’ but rather conceptions about the Catalan society, one can discuss the reliability of my empiricism (Thurén, 2005). In addition, it can be argued that the objectivity of my empiricism is to some extent doubtful. It is generally the case when studying societies that one cannot completely deny one’s own attitudes as highlighted by the critical theory, (Langergaard, et. al, 2006). Hence, the results I have arrived at are affected by the attitude of my empiricism and my own experiences. The words of one of the theories used in my project, Michael Billig, illustrate my point; ‘because nationalism has deeply affected contemporary ways of thinking, it is not easily studied’ (Billig, 1995, p. 37).

1.2.2. Delimitation

In this project Catalonia will be dealt with as a nation and its host country Spain as a state and similarly, the history of Catalonia inside the state of France will not be considered, as it is the relation between Catalonia and Spain which is the focus point in this paper. Further, it is not all symbols of Catalan national identity that I will touch upon but the ones which I found the most applicable for my theoretical framework.
2. The theoretical approach

In this paper, I will make use of the theories of Benedict Anderson, Michael Billig, Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Manuel Castells, Michael Keating and Charlotte Hamburger. The theories are briefly explained in this section and elaborated upon in my analysis. It is important to bear in mind that I have only brought forward the parts of the theories most relevant for my project.

Initially, the theory of ‘Imaged Communities’ by Benedict Anderson is often used when dealing with the issue of nationalism. Anderson’s definition of a nation is that it is a political community which is imaged, limited and sovereign (Anderson, 1991 pp. 6). Further, Anderson claims that long-established nations often find that they are challenged by sub-nationalist tendencies within their own borders which is most definitely is the case of Spain. Anderson’s viewpoint is that nationalism is based on cultural artefacts. In order to understand and analyse these artefacts one needs to examine how they were invented, how their association has developed throughout history and why they require such deep sentiment attachments today. As these artefacts were shaped, they became capable of merging with political patterns (Anderson, 1991). Therefore, this paper will examine such features in order to illustrate why the cultural artefacts necessitate deep sentimentalities in contemporary Catalonia and see how this is demonstrated politically.

Furthermore, in his theory of ‘banal nationalism’ Michael Billig discusses that the term nation carries two interrelated meanings with it; nation as the ‘nation state’ and ‘nation as the people inhabiting it’. It is the link between these two meanings which lays the foundation for nationalism (Billig, 1995). In this sense, it is worth pointing out that Catalonia is a ‘nation as people’ but it is not a nation state. It is a nation within the state of Spain and for this reason it is interesting to use the theory of Billig on this project. Additionally, national identity is thought to be natural to possess and natural to remember – it seems natural for humans to have a national identity. As Gellner points out, ‘a man must have a national identity as he must have a nose and two ears’ (Gellner in Billig, 1995, p. 37). Also, national identities are created along with the invention of national traditions as if these were natural and everlasting aspects of human existence. These inventions, or traditions, become so real to ‘us’ that we tend to forget that they are invented (Billig, 1995).

Moreover, Thomas Hylland Eriksen’s theory is used in this project to demonstrate the level of group belongingness in Catalonia and Spain. Hylland’s work is based upon the notions of social identification and enemy images. Hylland states that ‘every community is defined in relation to what it is not; outsiders, aliens, non-members of the group’ (Hylland, 1995, p. 427) and talks of two distinct definitions of group belongingness, here referred to as ‘us’ and ‘the other’. According to Hylland, a group must undergo interdependence and internal solidarity or cultural commonality from a sharing of certain practices or from an external enemy in order for the group to see themselves as ‘us’. This enemy picture then strengthens the identity of the ‘us’-group
Hence, the relevance of Hylland’s theory towards this project is when the Catalan citizens consider themselves as an ‘us’-group, as they share practices such as the Catalan invented traditions dealt with throughout this paper. The Catalan population can thus be argued to define themselves in relation to the ‘other’; Spain.

What is more, as is seen from the above mentioned theories, identities are social constructions. Another interesting idea of the identity issue lies in the work of Manuel Castells. The identity theory of Castells claims that the social construction of identities always takes place in a milieu of power relations and therefore, Castells suggests three forms of origins of identity building; legitimising, resistance and project identity (Castells, 2001, p. 7). In this project, my focus will only be on the resistance identity form and this form will be the only one explained and examined as this corresponds very well to the case of Catalonia; although I am not denying that the other forms of identity also match the Catalan case in some ways. The resistance identity is produced by those actors who are in the condition of being reduced by means of domination; and in this case, survival of their identity is based on the building of resistance different from, or opposed to, the dominant part (Castells, 2001, p. 8).

Furthermore, I will make use of the theoretical work of Michael Keating (Keating) on stateless nations and nation-building. Keating’s theory deals with regions which are part of a state but which citizens are ascribed to have an independent nationality. As examples hereof, Keating mentions Catalonia. Keating’s work in stateless nation is not about how the stateless nation can become independent from the nation state but rather how they can take advantage of their rights provided in the globalised age via institutions such as the EU in order to strengthen the nation from within, achieve recognition and to gain the same rights and functions as the nation state. This process is called nation-building (Requejo, 2001).

Finally, the assimilation theory of Charlotte Hamburger is considered in this project. The assimilation theory is a cultural ethnicity theory which involves a complete relinquishment of the immigrant culture for a complete takeover of the host nation’s culture. This does not happen automatically but requires an active assimilation policy. An active assimilation policy is necessary if the society is to avoid an ethnic segregated society where the ethnic groups are gathering in groups to form ghettos which would mean increased racism and social problems in the immigrant group and where linguistic and cultural isolation will result in dysfunctional immigrants that, again, will result in increased racism and social problems. The goal is a cultural homogenous society (Hamburger, 1989).

Summarised, the theories of Anderson, Billig and Hylland works together in the discussion of nationalism, the social construction of national identity and how to produce and reproduce the national identity through invented traditions, language, history and other artefacts which then creates a sense of belonging to a nation.
and to an ‘us’-group which at the same time distinguish itself from the ‘other’-group. The theory of Castells brings forward the illustration of how identity, not only being a social construction, is constructed in the sphere of power relations. Similarly, the work of Keating outlines the stateless nations’ opportunities to build and strengthen their position and in this way function as a nation without possessing the framework of a state which will be examined on Catalonia. Finally, the assimilation theory of Hamburger is used on the political and cultural view of immigrants in the Catalan society.

3. Historical and political aspects to Catalan nationalism

In this section, a very brief overview of the history of Catalonia will be presented as to illustrate the nation’s struggle for self-government within the Spanish state. The more throughout details of Catalonia’s history will not be explained; rather, focus will be on the periods in history where Catalan autonomy was (re)gained and lost and this will similarly reflect the political examination in this section.

In 1369, the Generalitat (the Catalan government) was established for the first time but as Catalonia was defeated in the 1640 war between Spain and France, its self-government was weakened. The total loss of autonomy came as a result of the War of the Spanish Succession which ended with the defeat of Catalonia the 11th September 1714 – which today is celebrated by the Catalan people as a national day. In the wake of the defeat, the new king abolished the autonomy and attempted to impose Castilian language and customs. Additionally, Catalonia did not benefit from the Spanish empire – it was excluded from trade with the colonies of Spain until the late 18th century (Hargreaves, 2000).

Nonetheless, when trade was no longer restricted for Catalonia, the nation’s economy flourished. The nation experienced an industrial revolution at almost the same time as north-western Europe. Along with the economy, Catalan society and culture thrived. Catalan intellectuals began to romanticise the Catalan past using the Catalan language. Meanwhile, as the contrast, Spain was undergoing decline in all the above-mentioned areas. The period of Catalan cultural nationalism functioned as a base for the rise of political nationalism in the 1880s Catalonia (Hargreaves, 2000).

3.1 Political Catalanism

The Catalan Valentí Almirall is considered the father of Catalan nationalism as he was the first to lead to political Catalanism by setting up the process of this new political ideologue. Almirall did so by proposing a restoration of self-governance and the recognition of the Catalan language. Also, he was the first to publish a newspaper in Catalan, ‘El Diari Catalá’, in which the main topic was regional autonomy (Payne, S, 1971, p. 19).

In 1887, the political party ‘Lliga de Catalunya’ was established with the aim of promoting moral, political and economic interests of Catalonia (Payne, S, 1971, p. 20). The party started using the word ‘nationalist’ in its
political programme and one of its members Enric Prat de la Riba (Prat), who was a Catalan nationalist, produced the first exact ideology of Catalanism (Payne, S., 1971, pp. 21). Prat went first to define the country of Spain as the political state and Catalonia as the real nation of the Catalan people believing in the completely settled nationality of the Catalans. Thus, the Catalan people needed a sphere of their own in which their nationality could thrive. However, Catalan nationalism was generally not separatist in nature but wanted separate governing institutions and autonomy. It was believed that this was needed in order for the economy, culture and society of Catalonia to flourish (Payne, S., 1971, p. 22).

Over the years, Prat’s political party turned into the Lliga and the new party leader in 1917 became Francesc Cambó. He achieved impressive results with reforms and new projects on behalf of Catalonia. Cambó’s results extended his reputation as an outstanding figure in Catalanism. In 1934, Cambó emphasised in one of his final speeches that ‘Catalanism has never been primarily a matter of ‘interest’, economic or other, but of feelings and sentiment’ (Payne, S., 1971, pp. 51). The king Alfonso XIII put forward an establishment of Catalan autonomy in order to resolve one of the country’s main political disagreements by responding to public demands. Nonetheless, as this move was introduced by a Spaniard, it was, ironically, rejected in Catalonia as autonomy should be established on the terms of and initiated by Catalans (Payne, S. 1971, p. 29).

3.2 Military dictatorship

Following, in 1923, General Miguel Primo de Rivera, a military commander of Catalonia supported by Catalans for his promotion of Catalanism, overthrew the regime and a military dictatorship began. Although once in power, Rivera initiated a centralist policy of anti-Catalanism. He dismantled the Catalan Mancomunidad (the closest yet achieved to autonomy). In this period, the hostility towards the Spanish state which was extensive and therefore, the support for political Catalanism in Catalonia thrived along with Catalan cultural activities (Payne, S., 1971, p.31).

Meanwhile, Francesc Maciá founded the political party ‘Estat Catalá’ (Catalan State) with a terrorist section called the Black Flag which attempted an unsuccessful murder of the king Alfonso XIII (Payne, S., 1971, p. 39). Marcia is considered another important figure in Catalan nationalism (Ross, 2002).

3.3 Regaining of autonomy, the Spanish Civil War and Franco

Succeeding the collapse of the monarchy in 1931, the regional governments regained autonomy in 1932 and Maciá became the first president of the Generalitat.

In the 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War, the Catalans retained most of its autonomy but in the final period of the war the power of the central government increased (Payne, S, 1971). The end of the war turned into the leadership of General Francisco Franco and resulted in a complete overthrow of the Catalan government, the
Generalitat, along with severe repression of Catalan culture. Franco’s authoritarian government and centralist policies were strong and the dictator period was one of Spanish history’s most comprehensive attempts for central control exerted by the Spanish state. In Catalonia, thousands were executed, imprisoned or forced into exile (Hargreaves, 2000). Catalan language was banned and Franco announced that the aim was; ‘...national unity, which we want with only one language, Castilian, and only one personality, Spanish’ (Payne, J., 2004, p. 238). In the larger cities, big posters exhorted ‘Speak the language of the Empire!’, (Payne, S., 1971, p. 49). Equally, the issuing of Catalan books and other publications and symbols of Catalan independent identity and nationhood such as the flag, the national hymn and the national dance were all forbidden. However, the national dance was only banned in the 1940s (Hargreaves, 2000).

3.4 Resistance during the Franco regime
Despite the despotism, Catalonia continued to fight for its nation. Catalan nationalist movements worked in discrete ways with clandestine operations. The Catalan public was influenced by the political opposition towards Franco and several factory strikes occurred. Likewise, at Catalan universities opposition groups were created using tools such as graffiti and placing the Catalan national flag (the Senyera) in public places and producing Catalanist leaflets (Medrano, 1995).

Jordi Pujol, whom I shall return to in the next paragraph and in section 3.6, was among the members of a university group. Accordingly, what was pretended to be a religious event at Montserrat turned into a mass demonstration of Catalanism and gathered thousands of people. The Catalan language was spoken throughout the event and the ‘senyera’ fluttered on top of a mountain too far away for policemen to pull it down. Alike, the network of underground nationalistic movements was dynamic and the Catalan church also played a big role in stimulating cultural activities (Medrano, 1995). In Catalonia, the church was the only major institution in position to publicly defend Catalan culture and language (Hargreaves, 2000).

An example hereof is seen in one of the Catholic oppositional groups where one of its leading members was Jordi Pujol. In the year of 1960, he was sentenced to prison as he had led anti-Francoist protests. Pujol believed that the language and culture were fundamental characters of Catalan identity. Pujol encouraged the people to pursue these core traits of Catalan identity and a prerequisite for this was some form of political autonomy (Medrano, 1995).

3.5 Catalonia in a democratic sphere
After the death of Franco the transition to democracy could finally begin and the Catalan political life thrived. With the new Spanish constitution in 1978 followed the Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia in 1979 which provided the region with a wide aspect of power (Medrano, 1995). The Generalitat of Catalonia consists of a parliament, a president of the Generalitat and a government (The Generalitat’s homepage nr. 1).
3.6 Convergencia i Unió – CiU

Furthermore, Pujol joined in the foundation of the conservative party CiU which supported devolution. The first regional election was held in 1980 and Pujol was elected president. Since then, CiU has enjoyed great success in regional politics in Catalonia and the party’s (now former) leader, Pujol, ran the Generalitat almost without coalition parties for 23 years (Ross, 2002) until the socialist party, Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya, (PSC) won the regional election in 2003. However, CiU regained their presidency in 2010 with Artus Mas as current president for the Generalitat (The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ homepage). Pujol is one of the most significant contemporary figure of Catalan nationalism and his political style has thus been entitled ‘Pujolism’.

The period of CiU in charge has meant trying to maximize the benefits for Catalonia inside the state of Spain and to promote Catalan interests internationally – especially in connection to the Spanish membership of the EU in 1986. CiU’s political agenda is attempting to further ‘normalise’ the language policies which means downgrading Castilian and promote Catalan. Similarly, the goal of CiU’s political programme is to extend the autonomy for Catalonia and to give Catalonia its own voice within the EU. Hence, the overall aim has been deeper devolution rather than separatism (Ross, 2002).

3.7 Partits dels Socialistes de Catalunya – PSC

The PSC is the main opposition party to the CiU. PSC is a sister party to the Spanish socialist party PSOE and this entails a different situation in the relation between the Catalan self-government and the Spanish central government as the CiU does not have the same connection to the Spanish conservative party. PSOE is dependent on PSC in the Spanish parliament and this enables PSC to put certain pressure on its parent party for the sake of own interest. PSC attempts for the Catalan culture and language to be strengthened and the goal is that the Catalan citizens can master Catalan, Castilian and English. The party believes that the continuation of teaching in Catalan, especially to immigrants, secures the future of the language (Ross, 2002).

Moreover, a slogan often used in Catalan politics is ‘som i serem’, which means ‘we are and we shall be’. This sentence is used in order to promote Catalan national identity but also to stress the fear of losing the exact same identity (Payne, J., 2004). Likewise, the government of Catalonia frequently makes reference to the Catalan identity in official texts and publications (Häkli, 2001). It is most likely to do so in attempting to underline the sense of common ‘Catalanness’ in the population.

In summary, history shows that the Catalan nation has for centuries been politically subordinated to the Spanish state and the nation has lost and regained its autonomy several times. The contemporary political agendas of the major political parties imply a promotion of decentralisation rather than separation. The struggle seems to have been for regional autonomy rather than full independence and for cultural (national) activities and values to blossom both in and outside periods of repression. Also, an increase of international
interests has been revealed in contemporary political life. The level of the Catalan endurance is perhaps of the highest considering its suppression, culturally and politically, for so many centuries.

4. Analysis of historical and political Catalanism

The previous section regarding the political history of Catalonia demonstrates several points of analysis which will be examined in the following.

As described in section 3.1, political Catalanism arose in the nineteenth century and nationalist political parties arose mainly with the aim of restoring the Catalan autonomy. However, once initiated by a Spaniard as it was by King Alfonso XIII, the proposal was rejected in Catalonia by way of indicating that the process should be started by Catalans (Payne, S., 1971). This reflects the strong notion of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and Spain as an enemy image for Catalonia in relation to the theory of Hylland and an even sturdier struggle of power between Catalonia and the state of Spain. As explained in section 3.2, under the dictatorship of Rivera in the beginning of the 20th century the hostility to the Spanish state among the Catalan population was extensive. This resulted in increased support for the political Catalanism and cultural activities flourished (Payne, S., 1971). This clearly shows the notion of Spain as the enemy image. As the ‘us’-group, Catalonia, had created a common enemy – the state of Spain – this strengthened the belonging to the nation of Catalonia. The cultural prosper at the time was a result of this strength of belongingness. Also, as the Catalans were under the dominance of the ‘other’ and thus reduced. Despite being under Spanish control, cultural activities increased along with the political support for Catalanism which can be argued to be a sign of the production of their resistance identity, as the theory of Castells suggest. Resistance identity in this case is the type of identity-building which the Catalans undergoes when under suppression and thus constructs the forms of collective resistance.

Additionally, the same resistance identity is identified under the Francoist dictatorship as emphasised in section 3.4, where clandestine nationalistic movements were operating in opposition to the regime. The resistance identity operates in otherwise unbearable oppression (Castells, 2001) as was the situation for the Catalan people during the Franco era. The continuing oppositional actions taken against the despotism illustrates the strength of the Catalan resistance. This collective resistance that arose because Catalonia was suppressed politically and culturally is perhaps the answer to how the culture and language of the Catalan people has managed to survive in periods of severe repression. Thus, the Catalan citizens can be argued to have built their identity in the form of a resistance identity during their entire history of gaining and losing their nation’s self-rule. The attempts from the centre of creating a unitary state and thereby abolishing all regional differences had the opposite effect in Catalonia. Instead of resulting in an actual cultural homogenous unitary state, the Catalans became more attentive to and aware of their distinct identity and nationality which is often the case in times of outside threats.
4.1. Cultural symbols in political patterns

Furthermore, one of the clandestine operations initiated in order to oppose the Franco regime involved the usage of the Catalan national flag, the ‘senyera’ (see section 3.4). The flag, functioning as a cultural artefact according to the theory of Anderson, shows how a cultural symbol has gradually become part of political patterns (Anderson, 1991). The senyera, the symbol of national identity, acted as a way of stating the opposition from the Catalan nation which was under repression by its own state. Thus, it allowed for the nation of Catalonia to be reproduced even though under dominance and helps our understanding of what the connotations of the ‘senyera’ are and why it might carry deep sentiments today. In correspondence to the theory of Billig, flags are used as a way of communicating a message and a national flag functions as a symbolic ‘focus for sentiment about the society’ (Firth, in Billig 1995, p. 40). As is clear from the above mentioned episode in Catalan history, the senyera can for the Catalan people be argued to be a focus for deep sentimentality today.

In addition, another way of seeing cultural artefacts transmitted into political patterns is in the political belief and style of Jordi Pujol; hence the notion of ‘Pujolism’. Pujol believed language and culture to be the core traits of Catalan identity and repeatedly used these in his speeches and publications (Medrano, 1995). The same goes for the general political life in Catalonia where politicians frequently use slogans involving ‘Catalan identity’ as to illustrate a sense of Catalanness, (Häkli, 2001). The need for worrying about and stressing the national identity is deeply embedded in both cultural and political life in Catalonia. In contrast, one can discuss whether it is likely for the people residing in Madrid to fear for their national identity. However, taking the Catalan history and what the nation has experienced into consideration greatly illustrate from where this fear arose.

4.2 Catalonia in the international scope

In the contemporary politics of Catalonia there seems to exist an agreement on how to treat language and culture and how to act internationally. The socialist party PSC wish for the Catalán language to be recognised as an official language within the EU and for the autonomies to be a part of the decision making within the EU. The same goes for the CiU as one of its aims is to give Catalonia a bigger voice within the EU. Also, both parties promote cooperation between Catalonia and other worldwide regions (Ross, 2002). To take advantage of a supranational institution in such a way is what Keating refers to as the transnational dimension. As it is only Europe which is relevant in this context, the following will be based on EU’s important roles for the stateless nation. Firstly the EU provides Catalonia with the opportunity of lobbying in the different European institutions and to cooperate inter-regionally without the interference of its host state Spain. Lastly, cooperation with the European institutions allow for a symbolic projection of Catalonia as more than just a region but rather a projection of the nation being at the same level as the nation state which is an important factor in the
construction of the collective (national) identity (Requejo 2001). Hence, through the European institutions Catalonia has the opportunity of legitimising its project and thereby achieves recognition of its nation.

Accordingly, the political programmes of the two major and leading parties in Catalonia, the CiU and the PSC, indicate the ambition of symbolic projection from the theory of Keating. To achieve these goals will not only increase the political influence for Catalonia but will simultaneously work as recognition of Catalonia as a nation. Likewise, the interregional cooperation can also serve as a symbolic projection as Catalonia has the change of showing that it can operate successfully around the nation state Spain.

Dealing with the case of the EU, Llobera brings forward the same interesting point as Keating when he claims that the case of sub-nations in Western Europe is that they wish to achieve a high level of self-governance within the frame of a supranational entity (Llobera, 2004). In regards to the political view of the EU inside Catalonia, as seen under the leadership of both the CiU and PSC, it can then be argued that the nation wish to accomplish a high level of self-governance within the framework of the EU. This would involve the transfer of sovereignty from the existing state, Spain, downwards to Catalonia and upwards to the EU. This is an interesting point of view as the Catalan government was greatly satisfied when Spain joined the EU – and prior to it pushed for this result – and the CiU’s attempt to give Catalonia its own vote within the supranational bodies of the EU. Thus, the attempt for deeper Catalan autonomy can perhaps also be reached in the international sphere of the EU and not just within the Spanish state. In accordance, this corresponds to the theory of Michael Keating as he suggest that there might not be a reason for a stateless nation as Catalonia is to challenge the established democratic nation states exactly because of the increased focus on the international environment and supranational institutions such as the EU. Therefore, Catalonia’s chance for more influence and self-rule lies within the acting in the free global market and by building a collective identity and strengthen own institutions through the EU. By doing so, the power and sovereignty of the nation state, Spain, will be reduced as a mean of easier achieving the goal of autonomy or sovereignty.

4.2.1 Dispute over revised Statute of Autonomy in 2006

Accordingly, the last point where Keating believes for the stateless nations to have an opportunity to strengthen their position in relation to the nation states is by the establishment and reinforcement of institutions (Requejo, 2001). The institutions of Catalonia was established with the Statute of Autonomy in 1979, as illustrated in section 3.5, and the political parties have pushed to strengthen these through the demand for increased self-rule. Recently, one of these attempts was initiated by the PSC when the party was in charge from 2003 to 2010. Pasqual Maragell, the PSC leader in charge, began the successful negotiations for enlarged autonomy in Catalonia which lead to the new Statute of Autonomy in 2006. The alternations suggested were approved by the Catalan government and the Spanish Cortes in 2006, (The Generalitat’s
PSC’s idea behind the efforts for increased power for Catalonia is based on the wish for Spain to become a federal state with increased influence for the autonomies on political, juridical and cultural dimensions and not a complete separation from the Spanish state (Ross, 2002). As emphasised by the theory of Keating, all the stateless nations generally wish for or demand a higher level of autonomy or independence which can come about via the state’s constitution and via strengthening the institutions of the nation, (Requejo, 2001). Efforts for enlarged autonomy were the case of PSC’s initiative on changes of the Statute of Autonomy from 1979; accordingly, Catalonia has strengthened its institutions and its position in relation to its state, Spain. Nevertheless, the Spanish conservative party Partido Popular (PP) raised a case by the Spanish Court of Justice as the party claimed that the Statute 2006 was unconstitutional to the Spanish state’s constitution. The Statute of Autonomy from 2006 was declared unconstitutional in 2010 and the future of the new Statute is still unknown (The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ homepage).

Nonetheless, in accordance with the theory of Keating, it can be inferred that the nation-building or nationalism in the political programmes of the CiU and PSC, the contemporary aims of Catalan politics, are constructed around the Catalan language and culture together with the aim of reinforcing the institutions (self-government). Likewise, the contemporary politics in Catalonia is concerned with increasing the Catalan influence on the international scene via the EU and through interregional cooperation. Therefore, it can be stated that the most essential building blocks in Catalan nation-building consist in the above mentioned features. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the areas of promoting the Catalan culture and strengthening the institutions are more accessible instruments of nation-building. This is due to the fact that Catalonia is a nation without its own state and thus it seems that having to exert influence internationally is more comprehensive than focusing on internal features.

Conclusively, the history of political Catalanism shows the development of a resistance identity, the use of the nation’s cultural artefacts as political instruments and continuing efforts for a higher level of self-government in the nation-building of Catalonia.

5. Cultural artefacts and symbols of national identity in Catalonia

The daily routines within and the traditions of a nation are what create nationalism which ultimately creates the nation (Anderson, 1991). The invented traditions of a nation are what Billig refers to as ‘banal nationalism’ and work as cultural artefacts and symbols of national identity (Billig, 1995). These help create the notion of ‘us’ and the ‘us’-group is defined in relation to the ‘other’ – what ‘we’ are not (Hylland, 1995) – which stresses the notion about the nation as an imaged community as it is formed in the communication and interaction between the citizens of the nation (Anderson, 1991). In this section, I will look into what can be argued to be the cultural artefacts of Catalonia and thus symbols of Catalan national identity. A thoroughly examination will
be provided of the two main traits I have found to be mentioned repeatedly by several analysts, the Catalan language, Catalán, and the Catalan national dance, the Sardana.

5.1 Language as the most important uniting point for Catalan identity

There is little doubt to the fact that many theories place language as the most uniting role for national identity (Anderson, 1991, Billig, 1995, Hylland, 1995). As previously mentioned, Billig argues for nations to have invented traditions and states that these traditions are part of our common-sense. They seem so banal to us and are constructions of nationalism. He calls these ‘invented permanencies’ (Billig, 1995, p. 30). Invented permanencies are embodied habits of social life and it can feel as if they have always existed; but they have mostly been invented through modern history. Language is a principal illustration of such a habit. The notions of invented permanencies are so strongly embedded in our common-sense that we tend to forget that they are invented (Billig, 1995). Billig places language as the primary illustration of the traditions of a nation and in Catalonia this is most certainly the case. As have been established section 3.1, the wake of economic development in Catalonia in the 19th century resulted in a revitalised culture in which the Catalan language worked as a major force in promoting the Catalan culture. During the periods of repression of Catalan culture, the language was spoken privately and the Catalan contemporary political parties and their leaders place the Catalan language at the heart of the Catalan national identity. Equally, the language is the feature of Catalan national identity in which the Catalan nation mainly distinguishes itself from the rest of Spain.

5.1.1 Language and group theory

In relation to group theory, the invented traditions, or shared practices as Hylland calls them, are what make a difference to the other-group. The other-group is not included in these practices and the communication of these differences can be seen in terms of a distinct language (Hylland, 1995). Accordingly, as mentioned above, the most important difference which differentiates Catalonia from the rest of Spain communicated by the Catalan people is the Catalan language. The common Catalan language is necessary in order for Catalonia to present itself as a culture and thus, present itself as equal to but distinct from the Other; Spain (Hylland, 1995). Hence, the uniqueness of the Catalan language utters an acknowledgement of equality which to a great extent reflects the Catalan nationalism.

5.1.2 Bilingualism and assimilation

Post-Franco, the self-government of Catalonia was re-established with the Statute of Autonomy in 1979 (the Catalan constitution) and the Catalan language was officially recognised as coequal with Castilian. The Statute requires ‘all citizens residing in Catalonia to use and know Catalan’ (the Generalitat’s homepage nr. 1) as the Spanish constitution demands the usage and knowledge of Castilian (Shabad & Gunther, 1982). Today, all the road signs and street names in Catalonia are in Catalan and Catalan is the first language in both elementary and high school; and it is obligatory to study Catalan in all the schools in Catalonia. At the Catalan universities,
professors have the right to teach their courses in Castilian or Catalan (Llobera, 2004). The fact that the professors can choose between one of the languages requires that the students attending the courses are able to understand Catalan. One may assume that this is often a source of internal language conflict in the Catalan society as this works as exclusive to the part of society, in this case the students, who do not speak Catalan. Hence, these students cannot attend universities in the case that their professors will give lessons using the Catalan language. This is another illustration of the assimilation policy of Catalonia.

In addition, with regard to employment it is often in high-status jobs where Catalan is a prerequisite (Llobera, 2004). Once again, the immigrants not speaking the language of Catalan is excluded. It can be argued that the immigrant minority in Catalonia will eventually be the ones in the Catalan society with low educations and low-status job. The assimilation policy will thus create an elite part of society which is able to speak Catalan, can undergo high-educations and eventually end in high-status jobs. Even if this is only the case until the immigrants learn the language, one must assume that some immigrants are not capable of learning the language because of various reasons. This might then lead to social conflicts between the minority and the majority culture and increased racism which is exactly the opposite aim of the assimilation theory, cf. section 2.

5.1.3 Language and security
Similarly, Billig speaks of the common belief among social scientist that ‘in the search for security, people who speak the same language are irresistibly drawn together (Billig, 1995, pp. 14). In the case of Catalonia, it can then be assumed that in the search for security the Catalan people have been drawn together on the grounds of them speaking the same language. However, as has been clarified in the previous sections of this paper, there have been periods in the Catalan history where speaking the Catalan language equalled insecurity such as the time of the Franco-regime (see section 3.3). At that time, the Catalan language was surrounded by insecurity and yet, the Catalan people felt an amount of unity by speaking the language – mostly privately – which also functioned as a silent opposition to the regime. Thus, it was not in search for their own security that the Catalans spoke their native language in the times of history where they were culturally repressed; rather, it was in the search for securing survival for their language. At times were the Catalan national language has been threatened by external pressure, the most recent being the above-mentioned Francoist-period, a national identification became meaningful (Hylland, 1995). This national identification of Catalonia was then defined in relation to one dominant contrast, Spain.

5.1.4. Language and hegemony
Furthermore, Billig claims that ‘the battle for a nationhood is a battle for hegemony...’ (Billig, 1995, p. 27). He argues that when achieving national hegemony it is demonstrated by pointing at an official national language (Billig, 1995). In accordance, it can be argued that Catalonia has achieved the status of a national hegemony.
within its own nation as it has appointed its official language, Catalán, in the Statute of Autonomy in 1979 and has re-established this hegemonic position of its culture in the new Statute from 2006 (see section 4.2.1). Nevertheless, it should be noted that Catalonia has ‘merely’ achieved the status of having a hegemonic position within its own national sphere. Besides, the Catalan language was appointed official as coequal with Castilian but as my analysis has shown Catalan is considered the first language in Catalonia. Hence, in Catalonia there exist a framework of a bilingual society but with Catalan as the hegemonic language.

5.2. The Catalan national dance; the Sardana

As established above, the linguistic pattern of Catalonia is the most important unifying point for Catalan national identity. Nonetheless, the Catalan national dance, the Sardana, also functions as an aspect of Catalan national identity and as a national symbol. This expressive form of identity is, as Billig calls it; an invented permanency (Billig, 1995) which arose in the middle of the 19th century but origins back to the 16th century. The Sardana is danced publicly and frequently throughout Catalonia; especially on holidays and on Sundays (Brandes, 1990). This can be argued to function as a re-production of Catalan identity when frequently repeating the invented permanency according to the theory of Billig (Billig, 1995).

5.2.1. The Sardana and resistance identity

In addition, the Sardana was also banned under the leadership of Franco but only for a short period of time as the dictator did not see the dance as big a cultural nationalistic threat as the language. Hence, the dance functioned as a ‘silent’ protest against the regime throughout the period (Brandes, 1990) and illustrates the Catalan resistance identity.

Moreover, the Sardana reflects the Catalan stubbornness of hanging on the national traditions as a way of establishing identity. The national dance have not changed nor developed over time and in the case of variation hostile discussions emerge from experts and the result is an unchanged Sardana (Brandes, 1990). The hostile reaction when changes of the Sardana are discussed can be compared to the Catalan history; when being threatened upon their identity, often in the form of cultural suppression, the Catalan people firmly hold on to characteristics such as language and tradition. Thus, the resistance identity seems to be in play in contemporary episodes as well and not just under complete cultural overthrow. Conclusively, the resistance identity is a major force in Catalan national identity.

5.2.2. The Sardana and assimilation

School lessons in learning the Sardana are mandatory in Catalan schools and this serves as a way of assimilating immigrant children into Catalan society (Brandes, 1990).

Furthermore, the musician Josep Maria Pep Ventura is considered ‘the founding father’ of the Sardana dance. Likewise, the assimilation aspect of Catalan identity is viewed in the case of Pep Ventura as he was not born in
Catalonia but immigrated to the region with his family when he was only three years old. When questioning if Pep Ventura is really Catalan, waves of intellectuals rise to defend the fact that the founding father of Catalonia is a real Catalan and the end result of such discussions is only further claims to the point that Pep Ventura was a true Catalan (Brandes, 1990). Pep Ventura has thus successfully assimilated into Catalan society and to such an extent that he invented one of the primary symbols of Catalan identity. Hence, it can be argued that Pep Ventura is a key symbol of the assimilation policy in Catalonia and a success story hereof. The focus is thus on the attributions the national dance has been devoted which have enabled it to work as a symbol of national identity and given it emotional appeals.

Besides, the Sardana is believed to be accessible for everyone. When one learns the steps, one can join the dance. Therefore, the Sardana is considered to represent the core Catalan values; ‘harmony, democracy and brotherhood’ (Brandes, 1990, p. 29) and these are the reason for its status as a national symbol. Again, the level of assimilation is clear in this national dance. As with achieving the status of being Catalan by e.g. learning the language, one can only join the dance when knowing the steps in it. The parallel here is that once the person residing in Catalonia knows the Catalan language or the steps in the national dance; only then, this person can become an active part of the Catalan society.

Summarised, as the examination in the above sections illustrate, the features of Catalan identity are accessible and everyone is able to learn these. Thus, the notion of national identity in Catalonia does not depend on race or origin but rather on culture. Catalan identity can be achieved through the learning of the Catalan characteristics such as the language. Hence, the notion of being Catalan is not an attributed position but an achieved one. Catalan identity is defined in terms of the Catalan language and culture, and is therefore culturally dependent – a Catalan is what a Catalan acts. As this is the case in Catalonia, one can easily understand the horror surrounding the cultural suppression the nation has experienced under the leadership of Franco. The cultural overthrow can be argued to be equivalent to identity destruction. Along with the language, both the Sardana and its founder, Pep Ventura, have become symbols of national resistance against the cultural suppression from the Spanish state.

6. Other artefacts of Catalan nationalism

In article 8 in the revised 2006 edition of the Statute of Autonomy from 1979, it is emphasised that the national symbols of Catalonia is the flag ‘Senyera’, the holiday ‘La Diada’ and the national hymn ‘Els Segadors’. Furthermore, it stresses the ‘legal protection for the symbols of Catalonia.. which.. ‘shall be the same as that for other symbols of the State’ (the Generalitat’s homepage nr. 3). Following, is a brief description of the Catalan national day and I have further included the Catalan national football team F.C. Barcelona as another symbol of national identity.
6.1. **La Diada – the national holiday and resistance identity**

Each nation has its national days in which the nation together remembers itself and its history. National days are celebrated as they remind the nation of a point in history important for the nation and this day often carries positive connotations such as the Independence Day (Hargreaves, 2000). Catalonia is celebrating a day which reminds the nation of its defeat by the Spaniards in the War of Succession. The 11th of September is therefore celebrated as a Catalan nation day (La Diada) which serves as a memory of Catalonia’s suppression and the desire to regain its lost self-rule. One can argue that this Catalan national day keep adding fuel to the fire of nationalism in Catalonia as it reminds the citizens of (yet another) point in history where they were culturally and politically overthrown by its host state Spain. This reveals another fact corresponding to the resistance identity on which the Catalan nation is constructed.

6.2 **F.C.Barcelona (FCB)**

The Catalan football team FCB is a clear illustration of how sport can demonstrate strong indicators of national sentiments. In the period from 1910 to 1914, FCB changed its official language from Castilian to Catalán and has gradually evolved into an important symbol of Catalan identity. Many Catalans support the FCB for more than just pure football interest. Rather, they support FCB as the club symbolises national identity. FCB’s biggest rival is Real Madrid and when the two teams meet in matches it is seldom without connotations to the political issues between Barcelona’s Generalitat and Madrid’s Cortes or the historical perspectives of Catalonia’s journey inside the state of Spain. Because of FCB’s status as national symbol, the sentiments attached to football matches, especially versus Real Madrid, are deep and embedded in many fan’s minds (Ramon, 2006).

6.3. **Shared memory-loss?**

Anthony Giddens claims that nationalist feelings arise when the daily routines and the sense of national security are disrupted which results in the inhabitants praising the symbols of nationhood (Giddens in Billig, 1995). Hence this view, it can be argued that Catalan nationalism has occurred and has been strengthened due to the nation’s historically constant disruptions of social life; the nation’s right to self-rule and to exert the features of its culture such as its language. If nationalism is fairly distant from everyday life and depends on interference of it, the Catalans must certainly beware of their nationalism. Hence, the point in article 8 in the new Statute (section 6) in which legal protection for the Catalan national symbols is stressed.

All these invented traditions are part of a reproduction of the nation of Catalonia. As Ernest Renan states ‘every nation must have its history, its own collective memory’ (Billig, 1995, p. 38) but once a nation is established it tends to forget the circumstances in which it came into existence. The nation undergoes shared memory-loss of its past (Billig, 1995). Nevertheless, it is important to reflect upon the recent history of Catalonia – a history so close to the contemporary time and so embedded in Catalan nationalism that it is hard to imagine it as ‘a
shared memory loss’. Rather, Catalan history contains very strong symbols of Catalan national identity and works as reminders for the nation that it has been (and to some extent still is) under Spanish control.

Conclusively, the symbols of Catalan national identity are built through invented traditions such as the Catalan language, the Sardana and other cultural artefacts. Catalonia has been exceptional in maintaining the features of its culture considering the long periods of cultural suppression – the symbols of the nation have often functioned as forms of political affirmation in these repressive periods.

7. Contemporary threat to the Catalan national identity

Having established that Catalan identity is mainly defined in cultural terms, it is thus interesting to examine the fear of culture loss. It appears that national identity is a point worth accentuating for the Catalan citizens and in the political life of Catalonia. In the following, I will look into the case of immigration and the assimilation policy in Catalonia.

7.1 The concern of the immigrants in Catalonia

Immigration in Catalonia increased in the 19th century where mostly the southern parts of Spain migrated to Catalonia due to the economic benefits in the region. This means that the main part of the immigrants in Catalonia is from other parts of Spain (Brandes, 1990). Non-Catalan speakers numbers 12 per cent of the total population of nearly seven million people in Catalonia (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ homepage). Immigration into the nation is undoubtedly having an impact on the Catalan culture. Therefore, it is a hotly debated area in Catalan politics especially considering the historical cultural threats the nation has experienced. Hence, the preservation of the Catalan culture appears to be at the hearts of all policies in Catalonia. As previously examined, the two major and leading parties in Catalonia, the CiU and the PSC, both value language and culture. When Pujol was in office, he was not afraid to express his concern with the high number of immigrants in Catalonia; to him, immigrants performed a major threat to the defining value of Catalan identity – the language. Pujol feared that the end result would be a destruction of the Catalan identity. Therefore, immigrants needed to be socially and culturally integrated into the Catalan community – that is, assimilated to the values that constituted Catalan identity (Medrano, 1995). Not surprisingly, this is also the view of Pujol’s former party CiU. Likewise, the Catalan socialist party PSC believes that immigrants must learn Catalan in order for them get on the Catalan society. However, the PSC has an open immigration policy – not surprising for a socialist party – that wish to help the immigrants become part of the Catalan society and views them as a potential resource rather than a strain (Ross, 2002).

Correspondingly, as the nation of Catalonia is defined in cultural terms and Catalan identity is not ascribed but achieved the consequences is that if one acts Catalan, then one is Catalan (as concluded in section 5) – then, cultural survival can be argued to depend on the level of assimilation. Thus, in order to be fully integrated into
the Catalan society, the immigrant must learn to speak the native tongue and embrace Catalan cultural values. The continuation of Catalan national identity is believed to be achieved by persistent use of Catalán and by teaching the language and customs to the immigrant part of the Catalan society. This is clearly established in the immigration policies of PSC and CiU in which the need for immigrants to learn Catalán is stressed. It demonstrates the parties’ promotion of the collective identity which enables assimilation according to the theory of Keating.

As examined in section 3.6 and 3.7, the main political parties in Catalonia wish for immigrants to learn the Catalan language. Thus, it is agreed upon that assimilation of the immigrants in Catalonia is the case. As emphasised by Hamburger, the assimilation theory is build up around the principle that the individual from the minority culture shall be treated the same way as the individual from the majority culture but on the premises of the majority culture; hence, the majority culture works as the dominant culture for a while and in the long run as the only culture. The assimilation policy suggests that immigration problems are a consequence of the cultural differences between members of the majority culture and member of the minority culture (Hamburger, 1989). The assimilation theory thus leaves out e.g. origin or economy as sources of conflicts between minority and majority culture. This corresponds with the theory of Keating which proposes that the collective national identity is constructed via the cultural identity. Hence, the cultural identity shall not be based on ethnicity and thus be exclusive but instead give the opportunity for assimilation of immigrants who wish to be part of the nation (Requejo, 2001). Likewise, according to Hylland the members of a nation do not need to be ‘the same people’ in terms of origins and race (Hylland, 1995, p. 435). The above mentioned theories thus agree that a national identity is defined in cultural terms. This fits perfectly to the Catalan national definition and assimilation policy of the nation; when one can speak the language and embrace the cultural values of Catalonia – then, one is Catalan. Therefore, the ‘Imaged Community’ of Catalonia is defined in cultural terms.

7.2. Is assimilation policy exclusive?

Furthermore, the assimilation process of Catalan national identity can be argued to function in exclusive ways towards the immigrant part of the society. If the immigrant does not learn the Catalan language, one must assume that the immigrant will be excluded eternally. But at the same time, we know that most of the immigrants derive from within the Spanish state and thus speak Castilian. Catalonia is a nation which recognises both Catalan, as its own official language, and Castilian as its other official language. Bilingualism is the norm and then the exclusion of the part of the society who does not speak Catalán is not exactly the case. As the theories argue, the assimilation policy does not work in an exclusive way as it allows for the immigrants to learn how to be ‘Catalan’ and achieve that status. In other words; the immigrants are therefore not excluded eternally. Hence, Hamburger’s point that the majority culture works as the dominant culture for a while as it
will be the only culture in the long run is important. Also, it can be argued that the assimilation process of the immigrants in Catalonia has made it easier for the immigrants to actually be integrated into the Catalan society in comparison with other nations where the cultural and linguistic ways of nation-definition lies under the ethnic aspect as is often the case. Likewise, for the Spanish immigrants the Catalan language is not as distinct from Castillian in comparison with many other world languages. Hence, the assimilation policy is more likely to succeed in Catalonia as the language barriers are not extremely immense.

On the contrary, the assimilation policy of Catalonia rules out the possibility of an integration process between the minority and the majority cultures. Assimilation policy denies that the two cultures together can find a common national identity and build the Catalan society on this shared identity. Hence, the result of such a policy can easily be a society divided in two groups – then, Catalonia will not only be a bilingual society but also a bicultural society. The two internal groups would consist of ‘us’ – the ‘real’ Catalans – and ‘them’ – the immigrants. When attempting to make ‘them’ become like ‘us’, the immigrants in Catalonia are thus likely to develop a resistance identity to this assimilation policy as was the case with Catalonia under periods of cultural suppression (all though in more extreme cases). Therefore, in the extreme case, it can be argued that Catalonia is performing a policy slightly similar to that of the Spanish centre at earlier times; namely the policy of cultural homogenisation.

8. Conclusion

The examination of Catalonia’s history and its associated political past illustrate the several losses and (re)gains of autonomy. Additionally, it demonstrates the high level of endurance of the Catalan culture during times of cultural suppression. Some of the most important and strongest elements of national identity in contemporary Catalonia were used as political tools in the fight against despotism, e.g. the language, the flag, and the national dance. These are today ‘invented permanencies’ (Billig, 1995) with deep national affiliations and are embedded in the political patterns in Catalonia (Anderson, 1991). The centuries of struggles for the political and cultural rights in Catalonia, the most recent being under the authoritarian regime of General Franco, have resulted in a resistance identity as emphasised by Castells. Likewise, the repressive periods brought with them a strong notion of a divided group theory; the ‘us’ (here being the Catalans) define themselves in relation to what they are not (the ‘other, its host state Spain) (Hylland, 1995).

Moreover, other symbols of national identity counts the Catalan football team FCB and the Catalan national day, La Diada. La Diada illustrates the notion of Catalan national identity functioning as a resistance identity as it is celebrated on the day Catalonia was defeated in the Spanish War of Succession. Thus, the national day reminds the nation of its misadventure within the Spanish state. Even though the theories suggest that a nation will suffer from collective memory-loss being absorbed by daily routines (Billig, 1995), it can be argued that
Catalonia’s recent historical past is so deeply entrenched in the population and in the political culture that the nation has not (yet) experienced forgetting their national memory.

Furthermore, the examination of contemporary Catalan politics has shown tendencies to promote the culture of the nation along with attempts for deeper autonomy and fighting for recognition in the international sphere of the EU. Keating’s theory on stateless nations matches Catalonia’s political behaviour, that is, by trying to exert influence on the supranational level of the EU, Catalonia can reduce it host state by placing its own nation at the same level. Catalonia thus works around and beyond the state of Spain.

The elements marking the national identity in Catalonia are many, e.g. the Catalan language and the national dance, the Sardana. Catalan became recognised as the official language of Catalonia together with Castilian in the Statute of Autonomy in 1979 after the Spanish transition to democracy. However, as Catalan is the dominant language in e.g. the educational system and in the public sphere, it holds the hegemonic cultural position and it is very likely to be a source of conflict inside Catalonia. Also, the Sardana is taught in the Catalan schools and upon learning the dance, one can participate in the tradition. Both the language and the dance make clear references to the assimilation policy.

Besides, the political view of the two alternate leading parties in Catalonia, the CiU and the PSC, is alike as regards assimilation policy. Both parties stress the importance in teaching immigrants Catalan and Hamburger’s assimilation theory fits the Catalan political culture well. The consequences hereof is seen in the exclusive ways the assimilation policy works towards the immigrant part of society who does not accommodate to the Catalan national symbols; the language being the most important. However, the assimilation policy similarly enables the immigrants to become Catalan as this is an achieved status that is not based on e.g. descent. Thus, Catalan national identity is based on and defined in cultural terms.

Altogether, the issue of national autonomy remains very much alive in Catalonia both politically and publicly. With a long and recent history of continually political and cultural overthrow and with national symbols functioning as reminders hereof, e.g. La Diada, it seems that the nationalistic feelings in Catalonia will continue to serve as the dominant ones.

Abstract

My aim in this project is to describe the elements of national identity in play in contemporary Catalonia and analyse from where these components have originated. Taking my point of departure in my theoretical approaches, I have analysed the national symbols of Catalonia with the aims of illustrating the strong sense of national identity within the nation, how these elements are reflected politically, and what the consequences of
these are in the Catalan political patterns. In this thesis, Catalonia is considered a national unit situated within the framework of its host state Spain.

The theory ‘Imaged Communities’ of Benedict Anderson is concerned with cultural artefacts and demonstrates how the Catalan national artefacts have signalled influence in both past and present Catalonia. As history entails, the Catalan nation has for centuries struggled for its democratic rights and to obtain political autonomy together with cultural acknowledgement while under severe repression by the Spanish central state. The most recent of these being the Francoist dictatorship which lasted from the end of the Spanish Civil War to the general’s dead in 1975. Here, analysis has shown that some of the cultural artefacts were used as instruments in the dynamic network of clandestine anti-Franco movements. As the Catalan language, the national dance Sardana and other symbols of Catalan identity were banned, these also worked behind closed doors as silent opposition to the regime.

Michael Billig’s ‘banal nationalism’ introduced the notion of invented permanencies and showed how the cultural artefacts were invented traditions which (re)produce the nation of Catalonia. As the invented traditions were reproduced under times of suppression, they maintained the nationalistic sentiments already attached. This thus strengthened the belonging of the populace to the Catalan nation while at the same time incited the notion of ‘us’ and ‘them’. The group theory of Thomas Hylland Eriksen illustrated this by way of indicating that the Catalan society distinguish themselves from what they are not, the ‘other’, when defining ‘us’. Also, these group sentiments were reinforced by looking at Spain as the common enemy of Catalonia.

Taking departure in the Catalan history, I have found that by applying the theory of Manuel Castells, the Catalanian national identity seems constructed around the patterns of resistance identity. This is similarly conveyed in the contemporary Catalan society; when the national identification elements are threatened, the resistance identity continuously comes into play.

Furthermore, the political parties in Catalonia are fighting for increased power for its self-government within the state of Spain while at the same time trying to exert influence through the supranational sphere of the EU. In order to analyse this, I have used the work of Michael Keating on stateless nations. Having established that Catalonia is a nation within the state of Spain, the stateless nation is attempting influence from an entity above state level. By doing so, Catalonia reduces the state of Spain and places itself at the same level as its host state. The analysis also revealed the promotion of Catalan language and culture on the national level.

When identifying the consequences of the political patterns in Catalonia, Charlotte Hamburger’s assimilation theory was applied, as the political pattern presented the usage of assimilation when dealing with immigrants residing in Catalonia. The analysis revealed how it is believed by the main political parties that immigrants in
Catalonia are to learn the Catalan language and accommodate to the Catalan culture. Despite the fact that Catalonia is officially recognised as a bilingual nation, the Catalan language is the dominant language within the nation. The assimilation theory in Catalonia showed how Catalan national identity is defined in cultural terms and serves as an achieved status. On the contrary, it exposed the exclusion of immigrants never adjusting to the Catalan national values and the surprising parallel to the cultural suppression undergone by the Catalans themselves.

References


Thurén, Torsten (2005), *Videnskabsteori for begyndere*, Rosinante Forlag, København

The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ homepage:

http://www.dtcbarcelona.um.dk/da/menu/InfoOmLand/InfoOmCatalonien/

The Generalitat’s homepage nr. 1:


The Generalitat’s homepage nr. 2:


The Generalitat’s homepage nr. 3:

http://www.gencat.cat/generalitat/eng/estatut/titol_preliminar.htm