

THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF THE CATALAN MODEL

Pau Puig i Scotoni

INTRODUCTION

I have entitled my remarks 'the Four Dimensions of the Catalan model'. My intentions are two-fold. On the one hand, I intend to present the Catalan model of autonomy and inter-cultural society and, on the other, to outline an explanation of why the Catalan model looks as it does and why it has been viable. To avoid misunderstandings, I would like to emphasize that I use the word model in the sense of a description or representation of reality, and not in its other meaning of an object of imitation.

I am an adviser in the department that promotes and co-ordinates the foreign policy of the Catalan Government. On the other hand I have also an academic background. That means that even though my perspective is 'from within' (the administration) I approach my subjects trying to retain some degree of distance and objectivity. In Sweden, where an old and proud tradition of 'reflecting bureaucrats' exists, I learned that the perspective 'from within' has its advantages. It is more aware of the strategic dimension of politics – that is, the means politics requires and the constraints it is subject to. Specially, it helps to discover the importance of having well elaborated models and normative doctrines – the tools administrations need not only to orientate themselves and behave in a unified, sustained and productive manner, but also to maintain indispensable political support as well as to be perceived as trustworthy and predictable actors.

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The 'inside perspective' also has its weak aspects. It attaches, for example, less importance to other dimensions of politics such as the legitimising function of models and doctrines. In academic contexts like this, the 'reflecting bureaucrat' often, thus, finds himself or herself in a defensive position. Since bureaucrats usually conceive their models and doctrines as strategic instruments to 'solve problems', they find few arguments against criticism that accuses them of gilding the reality.

SOME BASIC FACTS

Catalonia has enjoyed self-government since 1979. The Spanish Constitution defines it as a 'nationality' within the Spanish 'nation'. A majority of Catalans, however, consider Catalonia as a nation within pluri-national Spain. The most significant elements of Catalan identity are the region's language - Catalan - and the perception of being the most 'European' part of Spain. Catalan belongs to the group of Neo-Latin languages, as do Spanish, French and Italian. The Catalan triangle is situated in northeastern Spain and encompasses a considerable part of the Pyrenees, the frontier line between Spain and France. Its area is about the same as Belgium's. Catalonia has 6 million inhabitants. Catalonia's society is ethnically heterogeneous. This has to do, partly, with the relative wealth of the region and, partly, with the easy accessibility to it from sea and land which has encouraged immigration and population mixing. The last huge wave of immigration took place in the Franco era, when Catalonia received over 1 million people from other parts of Spain.

Despite the lack of important natural resources, Catalonia has a long commercial and industrial tradition and is still one of the most dynamic and wealthy Spanish regions. In simple figures, Catalonia represents 6% of Spain's territory, 16% of its population, 20% of its GNP, 24% of Spain's industrial production and 30% of its foreign trade. The Spanish state collects 24% of its tax incomes in the region.

Catalonia dates from the Marca Hispanica of the Empire of Charlemagne. The northeastern corner of the Iberian Peninsula was then politically separated from Moslem Spain. Medieval Catalonia was the dominant part of the Kingdom of Aragon, a confederate state that between the early thirteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries became a Mediterranean empire. Our country was integrated into the Spanish monarchy in the 16th century, in a moment of weakness and uncertainty. Therefore, its position in the new monarchy was marginal from the very beginning. Castile, not Catalonia, would create Spain.

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Moreover, Catalonia's geopolitical situation as a border region doomed it to strict control and supervision by the monarchy.

Under Habsburg rule, however, Catalonia maintained its political autonomy in a similar way to Scotland in the 17th century. Catalonia lost its ancient charters in 1714 as a result of the country's participation in the English-led coalition against the winning Bourbon dynasty in the War of Spanish Succession. However hard and calamitous the consequences of the military defeat were, the Catalan losses were limited to the fields of political institutions and culture. The public use of the Catalan language was forbidden, but people did not suffer from permanent land expropriations, 'ethnic cleansing' or from religious and social discrimination. Nor did Castilian authorities abolish the country's particular Civil law. Because the Castilian yoke was relatively light, the 18th century was a period of material growth and progress. Industrious Catalonia benefited from Spain's colonial markets, as Scotland did with the British Empire. In a more modest way than in Scotland, a modern civil society developed. The Industrial Revolution started around 1830. In the second half of the century, Catalonia became the 'Factory of Spain' and an island of modernity in a Peninsula still dominated by pre-industrial economic, intellectual and social structures.

Regionalism emerged at the end of the 19th century. It was nurtured by middle-class intellectuals, politicians and industrialists dissatisfied with their lack of influence in Spanish politics. The demand for self-government was formulated once Catalan leaders had judged, as unattainable, the goal of winning a say in 'Madrid politics'. Regional autonomy, they reasoned, would allow Catalans to decide about their own affairs, at least. The conflict between Madrid and Barcelona had come to stay. It would be fuelled by Madrid's fears and mistrust. On the Castilian plateau, regionalist demands were repeatedly interpreted as intentions to secede or to gain domination over the rest of Spain. In 1914, the four provincial councils of Catalonia were allowed to build a joint 'Catalan Office' (la Mancomunitat de Catalunya). Although it lacked political power and economic resources, this administrative body managed to carry out an ambitious program of cultural reforms and public works until 1923, when it was dissolved by the military dictatorship.

The aspirations of the regionalists seemed to materialize when the Spanish Republic conceded Catalonia wide regional autonomy in 1931. Nevertheless, this new period of political freedom was to be short-lived because of the instability of the Republican regime. The victory of General Franco in the

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Spanish Civil War resulted in the abolition of Catalan self-government, in 1939.

CATALAN AUTONOMY

The current Catalan self-government is founded on the Spanish Constitution of 1978 that recognizes 17 autonomous 'nationalities and regions'. Autonomous Catalonia has a constitution of its own and is represented and governed, to a considerable extent, by the Generalitat de Catalunya, the regional 'Government of Catalonia', composed of a Parliament, a President and an Executive Council.

The powers of the Generalitat are exclusive, concurrent and shared. When it comes to exclusive responsibility - for example, culture, development of Catalan Civil Law and tourism - the regional government has both executive and legislative powers. The concurrent powers consist of those areas of competence in which both the state and the region have jurisdiction. Usually, the central government establishes the basis for legislation and the Generalitat assumes the further legislative development and execution. Regarding the shared powers, the region can assume only the execution of state legislation.

The areas of responsibility of the Generalitat embrace a wide sector of social life. The most important issues are: regional economic policy; regional planning, building and housing policy; energy and environment; culture and media; education, universities and research; public health and social services; tourism, leisure and sport; police and public order.

One weak point of our home-rule system has been the lack of financial autonomy. Until recently, the principal source of revenue was bonded transfers from the central government. In 1993, however, the first move was made towards a greater financial independence by leaving 15% of the personal income tax generated in Catalonia at the disposal of the regional Government. Nowadays, this percentage has been increased to 30%.

One other deficiency is our weak voice in central legislation. The Senate, the Second Chamber of the Spanish Parliament, still has a long way to go before becoming the Bundesrat of Spain. Nor have the Spanish regions leverage on European policies in matters that affect them, as the German Länder have.

THE CATALAN MODEL

The Catalan model is complex and sophisticated. It has four main concerns:

- ◀ to preserve self-government and national identity;
- ◀ to guarantee internal cohesion;
- ◀ to ensure economic survival in the globalized market;
- ◀ to promote and strengthen the power of the regions within the European Union.

The last two concerns emerged after the achievement of political autonomy and the entry of Spain into NATO and the EU. The combination of these different types of objectives conferred on Catalan nationalism its actual character: a synthesis of traditional identity regionalism and a new economic and civic, so-called 'functional regionalism'. On the other hand, what gives the model its sophistication is the moderate, flexible and imaginative strategies Catalan nationalists have used to pursue their objectives.

A good historical precedent for the contemporary Catalan art of survival can be found in the merchant republic of Ragusa-Dubrovnik on the Dalmatian coast. From 1526 to 1806, when Napoleon abolished it, this small Christian Republic was a prosperous peripheral tributary city-state of the Ottoman Empire. The population of Ragusa-Dubrovnik was Latin and Slavic. The language of the administration was Latin but in private life people also spoke Slavonic. Its inhabitants lived in harmony thanks to the 'common values' furnished by Catholicism and Humanism. Ragusa/Dubrovnik would pass into History with the epithet 'the Athens of the South Slavs' for being the first place in the Balkans where literary works in Slavic language were produced. The Treaty of vassalage with the religiously tolerant Ottoman Empire was a means to maintain the Republic's freedom after the Turkish conquest of the Balkans. It was also a way to escape the economic rivalry and political hegemony of neighbouring Venice.

Ragusa-Dubrovnik survived for three centuries by combining a policy of loyalty to the Sublime Porte with a pivotal role in the international trade between West and East. The Republic's main instruments of power were its skilful entrepreneurs and engineers in the mining villages of the Balkans, a commercial fleet, and a low-profile consular corps.

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Moderation

The first characteristic of the Catalan model is its moderation. Mainstream Catalan regionalism has opted for devolution and 'stateless nation-building' instead of secession. It wants to achieve its objectives within the framework of the Spanish state. The ultimate aim is to secure the Catalan nation a comfortable position within a plurinational Spanish state. Stateless nation-building requires what, in Catalan debate, is known as 'shared' or 'limited' sovereignty. This is a stage that Catalonia has not yet reached. According to its supporters, shared sovereignty would provide exclusive powers in all matters that affect the preservation of national identity: education, culture, media, justice, etc. It would also give Catalonia more power in Spanish and European politics.

When dealing with devolution and secession, it is important to keep in mind that both are viable only in very special historical circumstances.¹ For geopolitical reasons, devolution, in Western Europe, was out of the question before the Long Peace, brought about by NATO and the European integration process. In fact, except for Northern Ireland and the Åland Islands in Finland, there are no examples of stable regional self-government in Western Europe before 1945. When the international arena is dominated by anarchy, state rivalries and the potential danger of war, regional autonomy represents a threat to the state's security; it can be used by the enemy to undermine its defence. That is why, in the Modern Age, border regions' assemblies in practically all states were successively abolished (Scotland, Catalonia, Brittany, etc.). It was the most secure way of preventing them from joining the neighbouring rival states in case of war. Before 1950, the only alternative for oppressed national minorities was secession. Apart from being dangerous and traumatic, the problem with this option was that it often was unviable. It only worked in times of war and imperialist expansion, when secessionists could count on military or diplomatic support from powers hostile to their state.

Today, we can speak about devolution in Western Europe because we are living in an extraordinary period in which peace has all but eliminated the objective grounds for the dangers the states used to see in regional autonomy.

¹ *Pau Puig i Scotoni, Pensar els camins a la sobirania ('Thinking about the roads to sovereignty), Capellades 1998.*

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Owing to its moderation, sense of responsibility and pro-European orientation, the Catalan model is also becoming a constructive point of reference to international institutions. OSCE, the Council of Europe, etc. need examples of how to satisfy regionalist or nationalist aspirations without modifying state frontiers and jeopardizing the stability and security of Europe.

Civic regionalism

The second feature of the model is its non-excluding nature. Catalan regionalism seeks to create social cohesion. It is a civic regionalism that answers the key question - who is Catalan? - in the following way: a Catalan is everyone who lives and works in Catalonia and wants to be Catalan. The Catalan model rests upon French *jus soli* instead of German *jus sanguinis*. However, it differs in one crucial aspect from the French model: Catalan nation-building aims for integration - not assimilation. Our model advocates interculturalism. What we call 'the new Catalans', that is people of immigrant origin, shall have the right to maintain their cultural roots. On the other hand, the model is not one of multiculturalism. Catalan nationalism wants to prevent ghettos. As the Lebanese writer Amin Malouf recently pointed out in a conference in Barcelona, societies break down without common values, such as respect, tolerance, mutual trust and understanding. To ensure social cohesion, Catalan nationalism asks the new Catalans for a willingness to share some values with the old Catalans.

The two principal instruments of integration are the language policy and policies aiming for the preservation of the welfare state. Catalan language policy aspires to make compatible the recuperation of the social use of Catalan with the individual right of the Spanish speaking citizens to live in Spanish. It is an attempt to square the circle in order to prevent social division. Spanish speakers who live in Catalonia enjoy exactly the same individual language rights as Catalan-speakers. We call this 'symmetric bilingualism'. That is the idea, at least. In practice, we are not there yet. Spanish-speakers can live totally in Spanish but Catalan-speakers can not do the same. Especially in Barcelona, it is still difficult to be dealt with in Catalan in all situations. Therefore, the actual principal target of the language policy is the promotion of knowledge and public use of Catalan as a compensation for the effects of the persecution under Franco regime. Apart from guaranteeing Catalan-speakers their linguistic rights, this policy aims to give former immigrants and their children, in particular, the opportunity to learn Catalan and, thus, facilitate their integration into society. The main instruments of the linguistic policy have been regional mass media and an

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united school system that ensures full command of both languages - Catalan and Spanish - at the end of the educational cycle.

Functionalism

The third trait of the model is its functionalism. The Catalan administration has progressively adopted the doctrine of 'functional regionalism'. This doctrine focuses on the effects that globalisation and the nation-states' progressive loss of economic and political sovereignty have upon the regions in the form of increasing dependence on external markets and resources. According to this doctrine, regions must become more active and assertive both internally and externally, to avoid marginalization and to survive. In a new world that lacks economic borders, they must improve their infrastructures, education, environment, culture, etc. to boost their competitiveness and maintain a qualified labour force. Also, they must engage themselves in the international arena to attract foreign investments, technology and tourism - all development factors they so badly need. Functional regionalism stresses, as well, the efficiency of decentralized administrations and the democratic gains that regionalisation normally entails a new level of political representation and civic participation, a closer contact between citizens and public institutions that favours transparency of politics and an improved accountability of the elected by the electors, etc.

Instead of contemplating this situation as a threat to their territorial integrity, nation-states should encourage their regions to move in this new direction. Only the states that understand that they need strong-willed, vigorous and well anchored regions - concludes the doctrine - are in condition to successfully tackle their present external vulnerability.

Catalonia positioned itself on the cutting edge of new regionalism ten years ago when it made an alliance with the three most powerful functional regions in Europe (Baden-Württemberg, Lombardy, and Rhône-Alpes): this group is known as the 'Four motors for Europe'. The Palace of the Catalan Government is today a place of pilgrimage for regional councils and assemblies from all over Europe. Usually, they are not nationalists at all (despite the composition of the Catalan government). They are interested in our economic development policies, territorial planning, health system, and particularly in the institutions our government has created to support Catalan exports and investments abroad. The Catalan administration promotes economic growth but not without taking into consideration what Tony Blair calls 'compassion'. Regional policies are intended to build a Catalonia that is economically strong and, at the same time, socially cohesive. In fact, self-

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government has been used, effectively, to provide our country with an incipient modern welfare sector.

International orientation

The fourth and last characteristic of the model is its international orientation. The Catalan Government has developed an extremely active foreign policy. The President of Catalonia, Mr Jordi Pujol, has visited most parts of the world, from China and Japan to South America. He has also been the leader of the Assembly of the European Regions. Catalan foreign policy accords with what social scientists have designated as regional 'paradiplomacy'. It has three main strategic objectives:

- ◀ to ensure Catalonia an outstanding position on external markets, international organisations and co-operation networks;
- ◀ to obtain some international recognition of its national identity (similar to de facto recognition that Scotland already enjoys);
- ◀ to defend the interests and the participation of the regions in the European Union.

Paradiplomacy is mainly concerned with entering or establishing international networks as a means of maximizing the region's economic power and freedom of action. It also strives for converting today's regional autonomy into an historically irreversible fact. The latter will be the case when the European Union implements the principles of decentralisation and subsidiarity to their final consequences. In our understanding, this is obtained when the Union, as the Assembly of the European Regions demands in its Declaration on regionalism, establishes 'a Europe of the Regions as a third level of government' by giving the Committee of the Regions 'the status of a genuine regional chamber'.

Social scientists make an important distinction between paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy. Paradiplomacy, they argue, is loyal and complementary to the macrodiplomacy of the state. It adds relationships and networks to those of the state and contributes to the improvement of its international status. Therefore, they continue, microdiplomacy should not be confounded with disloyal protodiplomacy which aims to prepare the ground for international recognition of a rebellious territory fighting for secession. The scope of paradiplomacy is limited to the spheres of competence of the regions. Paradiplomacy does not deal with subjects that have traditionally constituted the 'hard core' of diplomacy: 'war and peace', trade and monetary policy, etc.

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When regional governments travel abroad, it is to study exchange projects in fields such as health care and adult education, or to convince a multinational enterprise of the excellent choice it would make in establishing itself in their region.

WHY DOES THE CATALAN MODEL LOOK AS IT DOES?

I shall finish my remarks by sketching out an explanation of why the Catalan model looks like it does and why it has been viable. The point of departure is that the model is pragmatic and that it has developed progressively. Catalan nationalists have adapted themselves to given external and internal power relationships and economic realities. On the other hand, they have known how to face the challenges as well as to exploit the new opportunities generated by globalization, in general, and the European integration process, in particular.

A classic method of understanding political behaviour is to relate it to the 'political culture' of the actors. Catalan political culture favours realism and prudence. Catalonia has been defeated in all its military conflicts with the Spanish monarchy. The memory of the Spanish Civil War and its consequences are still vivid. What is more, Catalonia, as it has been shown, is an old nation of self-reliant free peasants, merchants and industrialists, used to making a virtue of necessity. All this goes against political adventurism.

Another circumstance to be taken into account when dealing with Catalan pragmatism, is what I have previously called "the relatively light weight of the Castilian yoke". Minority nations without traumatic experiences of ethnic cleansing, social discrimination, etc. tend to have a smaller degree of resentment. This facilitates the acceptance of pacts and compromises among the population.

If there is a passion in the Catalan political culture, it would be the passion for negotiations. This is because Catalonia, in modern Spanish history, has seldom been recognised as a legitimate and rightful political actor. Catalans love to say 'let us talk about it'. Our politicians feel best when they can sit at the bargaining table in front of political adversaries who respect them and consider them reasonable.

The passion for beating Madrid is confined to the football field. To that purpose, Catalonia has set up one of the worlds biggest football clubs - Barcelona FC. The Barça has as its challenging battle-cry: 'We are more than

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a football club! It escapes nobody's notice that Barcelona FC is the Catalan Liberation Army. It is, however, predominantly a mercenary army.

At the end of the Franco era, there were three major circumstances, or facts, to which nationalists had no other choice but to adapt. Each has left its mark on the Catalan model. For the sake of clearness, I would like to stress that the three continue to condition Catalan politics. The first circumstance is the eternally unfavourable power relationship with Madrid. Barcelona is strong but it is weaker, for example, than Milan, in Italy. And this is not all: Madrid, as the capital of one of Europe's oldest states, is much more powerful than Rome. The second is economic dependence on the Spanish market. The third is the demographic mutation of Catalan society, brought about by immigration. The formidable force of these circumstances could hardly have been faced with any other policy but moderation towards Madrid and social cohesion at home.

In this context, it should also be mentioned that Catalonia regained its self-government thanks to a strategic alliance between the nationalist minded middle-class and the left wing parties representing a working-class formed mostly by people born outside the region. The policies of integration and social cohesion that followed were dictated by the necessity of maintaining the 'new Catalans' support for autonomy. The implementation of the policies of integration and social cohesion were facilitated by the fact that our society has been dealing with newcomers for many centuries.

Contrary to what had happened on the two previous occasions in this century when Catalonia regained its self-government, this time it was lucky enough to become autonomous in the new context of globalisation and the so called Renaissance of the Regions. It saved Catalonia from again being perceived as an anomalous and intractable political problem. It also reinforced the legitimacy of autonomy as a means of dealing more efficiently with the increasing dependence on world markets. The doctrine of 'functional regionalism' is easier to sell to central governments than that of 'collective rights' which hardly can offer them the kind of economic benefits functional regionalism can provide. By integrating into its ideological arsenal the new arguments in favor of decentralisation, local initiatives, regional paradiplomacy, democratic participation and political transparency, Catalan nationalists have dramatically improved their power of persuasion. Nationalists can now, for example, argue that if Madrid does not agree to transfer to Catalonia the demanded powers, it will, in the long run, negatively affect Spain's competitiveness: 'You cannot hinder your own regions', they can say, 'when our competitors are permitted to rush to conquer new market

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shares, investments, tourists, etc. all over the world. If you did so, you would just be sawing off the branch you are sitting on'. When you are able to demonstrate to your adversaries that what is good for you, in the long run will also be good for them, then you can move mountains and achieve your ultimate goals. Provided, of course, that the goals are 'reasonable' - that is, compatible with your opposers' survival - as the goals of Catalan nationalism are.