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Review of Andrew Dowling, Catalonia since the Spanish Civil War: Reconstructing the Nation

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Andrew Dowling. *Catalonia since the Spanish Civil War: Reconstructing the Nation*. Eastbourne, UK and Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2013. 272 pp.

This book could not have come at a better moment. At a time when Catalan nationalism, and politics more broadly, seems to be at a crossroads and poses a challenge of an entirely new nature to the Spanish constitutional foundations and institutional model, a sophisticated analysis of the evolution of Catalanism is required to understand the nuances of the complex political game being played out within Catalonia and between Catalan parties and the Spanish government.

The book begins with a background chapter on the development of Catalanism in the early twentieth century. The next two chapters discuss respectively Catalanism during the harshest years of the Franco dictatorship (1939-1955) and during a period (1955-1970) in which the author identifies a revival in the expression of Catalan culture. The subsequent chapter, which, interestingly, spans the last years of the dictatorship and the first few years of the democratic regime (1970-1984), is developed around the idea of restoration of Catalanism. The next chapter offers a fascinating analysis of contemporary Catalan nationalist politics (1984-2011). The book ends with a short epilogue focused on the newish idea of independence for Catalonia.

This book offers at least three important contributions to the understanding of Catalan history and politics. The first is its analysis of the role of the Catholic Church in the development of Catalanism under the dictatorship. As suggested in the Series Editor's preface, this is quite an original argument as the importance of the Church in the politics of Catalan resistance has probably not been sufficiently considered. Yet, as a cornerstone in the Franco regime, the Church was given some leeway in having its agents speak and print in Catalan. This cultural production in Catalan was instrumental in keeping Catalanism alive in some of the most repressive years of the dictatorship. In showing how the Church became a strong agent of Catalanism, Dowling explains how and why the various forces of the left lost leadership in the movement of Catalan resistance. This argument also helps to better understand the dominance of the Christian-Democratic CiU in contemporary Catalan politics. Dowling's analysis of the Church's place in the evolution of Catalanism also represents a contribution to the literature on nationalism and religion insofar as Catalan nationalism is not a 'religious nationalism' but has certainly been shaped by Catholicism.

A second contribution of this book is to provide insight into the role of Jordi Pujol in contemporary Catalan politics. Pujol acquired tremendous respect

and admiration within Catalan civil society as a result of his prominent opposition to the Franco regime and leadership role in struggling for the expression of the Catalan language and culture during the dictatorship. It is not only that Pujol's status within Catalonia helped the political domination of the CiU through the 1980s and 1990s, but also, as Dowling explains, that his understanding of Catalonia's relationship with the rest of Spain became orthodoxy. 'Pujolism', the author argues, consisted in 'building' Catalonia, that is, increasing its autonomy within the Spanish *Estado de las autonomías* without looking to secede from Spain.

The enlightening analysis of the transition away from Pujolism represents a third important contribution of this book. Indeed, times have changed in Catalonia and the carefulness of Pujol's approach has given way to a clearer challenge to the integrity of the Spanish state. This has coincided not only in the rise of the ERC, but also in a profound change within the CiU where many seem to have concluded that the limits of the *Estado de las autonomías* have been reached when it comes to meeting the needs of Catalonia. This being said, one of the virtues of this book is its discussion of the political and ideological cleavages within Catalonia, and these cleavages mean that despite an apparent growing consensus within nationalist circles on the way ahead for Catalonia the relationship between the secessionist left and the traditionally autonomist CiU promises to remain uneasy.

A question this book leaves us with is: where does Catalan nationalism begin and where does Catalanism end? There is a need for some conceptual distinctions here insofar as Catalanism seems to be discussed primarily as a movement of cultural expression whereas the term 'nationalism' is employed more to analyze Catalan politics in the democratic period. Nevertheless, *Catalonia since the Spanish Civil War* is an excellent and a well-balanced study. Indeed, a frequent problem with research on nationalism is that it is often guilty of methodological nationalism, that is, the reification of groups as nations, which is often accompanied by a celebration of nationhood. This book does not do that, nor does it fall into the opposite trap of demonizing nationalism. Such objectivity is rare and makes Dowling's book particularly valuable.

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