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### Rethinking Citizenship

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## **Politics of Memory and Managing Trauma in Spain: Constructing Identities**

*Peter Zwart*

### **Abstract**

How have the politics of memory in Spain, through the concepts of collective memory and trauma, constructed and influenced collective identities? It was only in 2004 that the 36<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Socialist Party included in its electoral platform the recovery of Spain's historical memory, and only in 2007 that, by means of a new law called 'Ley de Memoria Histórica', the victims of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime were officially recognized. The regime was condemned by some and francoist symbols have started to be removed from public buildings and spaces. Why is this only happening almost thirty years after the Franco regime fell and how? It is clear that Spain still needs to come to terms with its past when trauma was revived with the 2004 terrorist attacks in Madrid. The politics of memory and collective identity, as conceptual frameworks, will help to bring light into the analysis of this paper. The traumatic memory of the Franco regime seems to potentially support the need for belonging to an identity that opens to the European and the global. In this sense, one could even consider that the traumatic memory of the Franco regime and its terrible consequences has united Spain in some way as well. This paper will conclude that during the political transition in Spain the desire for peace and stability supported the amnesty of the political pact of silence which prevented the discussion of the painful past issues and, therefore, conciliation. In the end, the results will establish Spain's need to recover minority identities and to open itself to a European identity so as to belong to the European club.

**Keywords:** Politics of memory, trauma, post-Franco Spain, European identity, collective identity

## Introduction

Madrid. March 11<sup>th</sup> 2004. 07:00. Four regular trains leave the station of Alcalá de Henares. 07:39. Close to the station of Atocha in the centre of Madrid a deafening bang shocks the area. 07:42. Explosions in all four trains cause almost 200 casualties and 1,800 wounded, leaving Spain astonished and in agony.

Even before the smoke got away, people thought about ETA, a nationalist and separatist movement from the Basque Country. Multiple bomb attacks had been organized by them in Madrid. However, according to others the terrorist attacks on the trains in Madrid came from another side, al-Qaeda, arranging repercussions for Spain's participation in the war in Iraq. The question of the perpetrators of these bombings still represents a contemporary schism in Spanish society. The divide between the right and the left in Spain goes far back in history and went through unique developments during the Civil War and the subsequent dictatorial regime under General Francisco Franco. After his death in 1975 Spain was to enter a period later named the Transition. After almost forty years of war and dictatorship the country agreed on an infamous law of amnesty, better known as the *Pact of Forgetting* or *Pact of Silence*, meant to be a conciliation between left and right for once and for all. Although not the only event that did so, the 2004 terrorist attacks, whoever the perpetrators were, have shown that the divide never withered. Old wounds and contradictions reoccurred in Spanish society leading to a rethinking of decisions made during the Transition.

It was only in that same year that the 36<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Socialist Party (PSOE) included in its electoral platform the recovery of Spain's historical memory, and only in 2007 that, by means of a new law called the *Law on the Historical Memory*, the victims of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime were officially recognized. The regime was condemned by some and Francoist symbols started to be removed from public buildings and spaces. The law was accepted with a lot of resistance; 137 members of Parliament voted against it, 184 in favor. Especially the right-wing party Popular Party (PP), the successor of the Francoist People's Alliance (AP), considered the law an act of retribution solely, ripping open old wounds and supporting contradictions while rewriting history from one perspective. The divide between right and left is felt throughout society and clearly present in media such as newspapers and radio stations. It is clear that Spain still needed to come to terms with its past when trauma was revived with the 2004 terrorist attacks in Madrid. Seemingly, several collective identities in Spain had still not settled together.

The main question of this research is then how politics of memory constructed and influenced collective identities in Spain. The concepts of collective memory, trauma and the politics of memory serve as the conceptual frameworks in this study, bringing light into the analysis. Furthermore, the traumatic memory of the Civil War and the Franco regime seems to potentially support the need for belonging to an identity that opens to the European and the global. In this sense, one could even consider that the traumatic memory of the Franco regime and its terrible consequences has united Spain in some way as well.

In order to answer the questions of this research, the first section offers the theoretical background to introduce concepts that support the rest of the study. Subsequently, since it is fair to say that the contemporary Spanish cultural and political milieu can hardly be understood without taking into account the politics of memory during the Civil War and the totality of the postwar experience, the second section analyzes the actual politics that directly or indirectly had consequences for the memory and identity in Spanish society both during and after the Franco regime. Although it is undoubtedly difficult to understand the memory of the victorious and the vanquished it is possible by

studying the development of the regime and later democratic governments through their handling of the matter. The answers offered in this section are based on a study of the existence of a traumatic collective memory of the Civil War, which drove the majority of the protagonists to seek to avoid its repetition at any cost. Furthermore, the answers provide the possibility to analyze the constructions of identity in Spain, mainly the possible opening up to the European and the global. This paper will conclude in the third section that during the political transition in Spain the desire for peace and stability supported the political pact of silence which prevented the discussion of the painful past and, therefore, reconciliation. The results establish Spain's need to recover minority identities and to open itself to a European identity so as to belong to the European club.

The topic of memory in Spain is extensively touched upon in the last decade, not only by academics but also *from below*. Especially the Law on the Historical Memory and the subsequent exhumations, the opening of mass graves dated back to the period of the Franco dictatorship and a new twist to the politics of memory in Spain, caused an explosion of attention. Still, this research is relevant, since it is the connection between the collective memory and the extent of European identity in Spain that makes this research standing out. It offers an explanation on how the Civil War in Spain might have united the Spanish in some way, although the negative sides of such a war cannot be underestimated.

A multidisciplinary approach supports this research because it deals with separate, but connected, fields of history, sociology, psychology and politics. For example, studies on collective memory and the workings of trauma lie at the basis of some explanations in this paper, whereas, in other parts, it is political theory in a historical perspective that sheds light on what is analyzed. Thus, it is the connections made in this study that make it relevant. General and specialized monographs, journal articles, newspapers, dissertations, conference papers and magazines are the sources that support this research.

## I. Politics of memory and managing trauma in Spain: constructing identities

### 1) *Theoretical background: on collective traumatic memory*

It is in the nature of physical trauma (*wound* in Greek) to violate and impair the normal functioning of the body. Consequently, a mental trauma would mean an exceeding and violation of the normal mental processing ability and frames of reference.<sup>1</sup> Traumas can be very explosive because of an intense change within a short time. Many of the most severe traumas grow out of abrupt changes in the qualities of social relationships. In the case of Spain, one could think about the loss of a father, a mother, or any other close relative. Such a painful experience permanently reshapes an individual's world. It is also evident in the experience of exile, which is proven to lead, in many cases, to intense struggles with identity on coming back.<sup>2</sup> In the case of Spain, during the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship

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<sup>1</sup> A. Gómez, "Toward a Pragmatic Version of Memory: What Could the Spanish Civil War Mean to Contemporary Spain?" In *Unearthing Franco's Legacy: Mass Graves and the Recovery of Historical Memory in Spain*, ed. C. Jerez-Farrán and S. Amago (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 208.

<sup>2</sup> M. Richards, "From War Culture to Civil Society: Francoism, Social Change and Memories of the Spanish Civil War," *History & Memory* 14 no. 1/2 (2002): 104.

hundreds of thousands were exiled to France or other countries, strongly influencing their feeling of identity towards Spain.

Common symptoms of trauma are a feeling of detachment and estrangement from others, as well as an impaired memory.<sup>3</sup> It is exactly disassociation which is the mechanism by which intense experiences are disconnected from the social domain of memory, and by which terrorized people are silenced.<sup>4</sup> Even when a traumatic event can be dismissed from consciousness, it will resurface in feelings of anxiety and despair.<sup>5</sup> Trauma is inherently about memory and forgetting. In some cases it is argued that sometimes non-communication is needed to maintain *the sacred*.<sup>6</sup> Communication is then undesirable and silence preferred. However, silence is not the same as forgetting. The difference is sometimes misunderstood, for example in the popular translation in Spain of the amnesty law of 1977, which has been called at the same time both *Pact of Forgetting* and *Pact of Silence*. Surely, the latter is most suitable. Awful experiences, especially of loss, are impossible to forget when in the phase of trauma, because they are beyond normal human comprehension and cannot be assimilated into personal and collective narratives at that moment.<sup>7</sup> Using the metaphor of a tumor, it is best to cut it out. Thus, the best treatment of trauma is to narrate the traumatic event, a possibility not offered in the case of Franco's Spain because of several reasons, one being the fact that the people were ripped from basic liberties. Frustrations and guilt complexes continued to be felt in Spanish society, which can be described to politics of memory during and after Franco.<sup>8</sup> It is telling that Judith Lewis Herman, professor of clinical psychiatry at the Harvard University Medical School in Boston, introduces her book *Trauma and Recovery* confirming that a trauma has to be dealt with.

The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. [...] Atrocities, however, refuse to be buried. [...] Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of victims. [...] Only when the truth is finally recognized, survivors can begin their recovery.<sup>9</sup>

A traumatic memory differs from other memory in that sense that usually people tend to remember past experiences as being more positive than they actually were, called retrospective Pollyannaism, consequently leading to the fact that negative experiences were less often said to have been experienced.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, traumatic events will be retained stronger within memory because the event is often mentally rehearsed.<sup>11</sup> This is essential even in a biological sense. To struggle against extinction involves resisting obliteration after a catastrophe to learn from the past and not make the same mistakes again. Thus, the concept of memory is concerned with more fields of study than just psychology and the individual. If society is to continue, social remembering is just as vital as forgetting.

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<sup>3</sup> A.G. Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory: Major Events in the American Century* (New York: Armonk, 1998), 3.

<sup>4</sup> J. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: the Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 239.

<sup>5</sup> Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> J. Zulaika, "Excessive Witnessing: The Ethical as Temptation," in *Witness & Memory: the Discourse of Trauma*, ed. A. Douglass and T.A. Vogler (New York: Routledge, 2003), 105.

<sup>7</sup> Richards, "From War Culture to Civil Society," 94.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>9</sup> Herman, 1.

<sup>10</sup> D. Stephen Lindsay and J. Don Read, "Adults' Memories of Long-past Events," in *Memory and Society: Psychological Perspectives*, ed. L.G. Nilsson and N. Otha, (New York: Psychology Press, 2006), 53.

<sup>11</sup> K. Pezdek, "Memory for the Events of September 11, 2001," in *Memory and Society: Psychological Perspectives*, ed. L.G. Nilsson and N. Otha, (New York: Psychology Press, 2006), 77.

Consequently, the concept of trauma can also be applied to the experiences of an entire group of people, being only different from an individual trauma in the sense that it is shared with others. When time passes and stories are retold events often get stereotyped as they become part of collective memories.<sup>12</sup> In other words, collective traumas tend to become standardized through the elaboration of myths and legends. Such accounts provide ingredients for the creation of a sense of moral unity among any given group of people, linking personal lives with historical circumstances. Notions about “who we are” are shaped to a large degree from the shared identities that grow out of extraordinary events in the social realm.<sup>13</sup> Although memory is reflected in the retrieval of information that is stored in the brains of individuals, the contents of the human brain are primarily social. It is through interaction that we construct the world around us. Images of ourselves and our environment are shaped by memories of many we have never known or shall meet.<sup>14</sup> Thus, it is necessary to touch upon the concepts of collective memories and identities.

What is collectively remembered is not the sum of isolated personal experiences, but something that was an intensely shared communal experience, the sum of a collection of separate but similar individual experiences.<sup>15</sup> Individual memory and collective memory coexist in time, mutually influencing each other.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, there can be various overlapping collective memories, since individuals may have different and competing social identities such as religion, gender and nationality.<sup>17</sup> Knowledge about collective memory is largely indebted to the classical work *The Invention of Tradition* by the British historian Eric Hobsbawm in 1992. It states that memory is almost created out of nothing and that the population can relatively easily be coerced or misled. The past is thus intentionally manipulated by elites. Memory is subjective in many cases to political functionalism.<sup>18</sup> It is exactly in this way how Franco has tried, and has managed, to create a common memory of the Civil War that manipulated the whole of Spain. Individual and collective memory should not seriously contradict each other if a regime wants stability. When this is the case, a solution is to invent an official memory for everyone, which is exactly what happened during the Franco regime and again with the Transition after Franco’s death, which will be analyzed later in this paper. It is a clear sign of politics of memory since Franco legitimated his reign on myths that create false memories and, consequently, an identity of Spain, because who people feel they are is closely related to what they (claim to) remember.<sup>19</sup> Memory is not simplistically about truth and untruth, but rather about a battle between various truths and untruths that each political project invents in order to justify itself even to itself, and to justify its past, present, and, above all, its future.<sup>20</sup> Thus, it is the collective memory of a country that provides us with a framework for understanding and interpreting the present. Such a memory can pass from generation to generation. Although victim to another interpretation, experiences in this way become part of a transmitted collective

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<sup>12</sup> Neal, 201.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>15</sup> A. Douglass and T.A. Vogler, eds., *Witness & Memory: the Discourse of Trauma* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 11.

<sup>16</sup> P. Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia, the Role of Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002), 2.

<sup>17</sup> A. Cenarro, “Memory beyond the Public Sphere: The Francoist Repression Remembered in Aragon,” *History & Memory* 14 no. 1/2 (2002): 178.

<sup>18</sup> E. Hobsbawm cited in V. Druliolle, “Democracy Captured by its Imaginary: The Transition as Memory and Discourses of Constitutionalism in Spain,” *Social & Legal Studies* 17, no. 1 (2008): 78.

<sup>19</sup> P. Antze and M. Lambek, eds., *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* (New York: Routledge, 1996), xxi.

<sup>20</sup> S. Cardús i Ros, “Politics and the Invention of Memory: For a Sociology of the Transition to Democracy in Spain,” in *Disremembering the Dictatorship: the Politics of Memory since the Spanish Transition*, ed. J. Ramon (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 24.

memory, which is still remarkably alive and influential. More than 70 percent of the Spanish population had not lived through the Civil War, but the trauma still remains.<sup>21</sup>

## 2) *Politics of memory in Spain: between the Civil War and the recovery of traumatic memory*

To understand the gravity and the origins of the traumatic memory in Spain some background information of the politics of memory during and after the Franco dictatorship has to be offered. The figure of casualties of the Civil War is most often approximated to be between 450,000 and 650,000.<sup>22</sup> <sup>23</sup> Another approximate 450,000 fled or were exiled during the Civil War and its near aftermath.<sup>24</sup> One can be surprised at the disturbingly high proportion of the deaths away from the battlefield. Needless to say, every Spaniard had relatives lost to him. The years 1936-1945 in Spain saw a catastrophic civil war followed by repression and initial economic misery.

The nature of Franco's Spain was reflected in the wide-ranging repression of the vanquished from the Civil War, with the execution of political prisoners and the maintenance of martial law until 1948.<sup>25</sup> The occasional political messages offered by the tightly controlled media and by government representatives were often received with apprehension by a population that had as its main political priority the preservation of peace.<sup>26</sup> Although changes would occur in the use of violence during the Franco regime, illegal detention, execution and torture remained frequent during this period.<sup>27</sup>

The French philosopher Maurice Halbwachs demonstrated that public space is the precondition for the construction of memory by any social group. Collective memory, according to him, results from a construction process where public recognition is provided.<sup>28</sup> Not only did the Franco regime have a monopoly on violence, but it also monopolized the public memory and the public space, which became occupied only by the victors of the war.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the fact that the public space was denied to the vanquished caused the repression of their construction of a collective memory and their dealing with their trauma. There was no opportunity to mourn publicly and there were no symbolic or cultural references which could have helped the vanquished constructing their memory.

Public institutions in Franco's Spain were inefficient, hostile and repressive. This affected Spaniards' values, making them pessimistic in social and collective matters. This resulted in a society that grudgingly but passively accepted the unbearable social conditions

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<sup>21</sup> Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 268.

<sup>22</sup> P. Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution & Revenge* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2006), 302.

<sup>23</sup> V. Alba, *Transition in Spain: From Franco to Democracy*, trans. by B. Lolito (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1978), 172.

<sup>24</sup> F. Ribeiro de Meneses, *Franco and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 119.

<sup>25</sup> J. Ruiz, *Franco's Justice: Repression Madrid after the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>26</sup> A. Cazorla, "Order, Progress, and Syndicalism? How the Francoist Authorities Saw Socio-Economic Change," in *Spain Transformed, the late Franco dictatorship, 1959-1975*, ed. N. Townson (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 98.

<sup>27</sup> P. Aguilar, "Justice, Politics, Memory, and Democratization in the Southern Cone," in *The Politics of Memory: Transitional Justice in Democratizing Societies*, ed. A. Barahona de Brito, C. González-Enriquez and P. Aguilar (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 104.

<sup>28</sup> M. Halbwachs cited in Cenarro, "Memory beyond the Public Sphere," 178.

<sup>29</sup> M. Richards, *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco's Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4.

even during the 'Hunger Years' of 1939-1945.<sup>30</sup> The post-war division of Spanish society, into victors and vanquished, was deliberately designed and maintained to keep the memory of the Civil War alive in order to legitimize a dictatorial power whose origins lay in military revolt.<sup>31</sup> A healing of wounds went against the logic of the regime because it wanted to 'purify' Spain. Consequently, a society was created that was never capable of putting behind it the trauma of the Civil War.

Spanish lifestyle acquired the signs of a collective nightmare. No one trusted his neighbor, since everyone lived in fear of being denounced. Young people, who had not known the Republic, grew up in complete indifference and apathy.<sup>32</sup> People were individualized as social groups were forcibly split apart, ensuring a retreat into the domestic sphere, breaking down social solidarities and thus the physical energy necessary for resistance. Half of Spain was denied any collective identity beyond the state's own construction of 'Family and Fatherland'.<sup>33</sup> Even in that domestic sphere the effects of terror could be felt in a strong way, mainly because of Franco's alliance with the Church. It turned members of families against each other, contributing to the country's fear. The Church was grateful of Franco's protection during the Civil War and now praised his regime in return. It would constantly evoke the memory of the murdered martyrs and boost its emotional impact among the faithful, wiping out any trace of sympathy for the vanquished.<sup>34</sup>

For almost forty years Spaniards had lived subjected to fear – fear of war, of official terror, of police, of poverty, of communists, for remaining outside the favor of the government to some and for seeming to be moderate to others.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, it was exactly the culture of depoliticization since 1945 that left behind a situation in which a new start could be made, free of the extremism of the Civil War generation.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, levels of uncertainty were extremely high in Spain after the death of Franco. Many decisions adopted during the Transition in the 1970s were taken with a strong risk aversion. Spanish society might indeed have been a ticking time bomb, on the verge of another violent conflict. People were deeply skeptical about party politics. They remembered what they had seen or were told about the years of the Republic in the 1930s.<sup>37</sup> There were indeed some similarities between the 1930s and the 1970s, and although they might have been exaggerated, they reactivated people's memories of that time. A transition truly *against* the dictatorship could have triggered these memories even more. Subsequently, an important step in Spanish history was taken by the signing of an amnesty law in 1977, giving impunity to those who were, in name of the dictator, responsible for the abuses of human rights.<sup>38</sup> A collective memory in Spain surfaced when most groups saw the idea of 'never again' as the absolute priority, meaning that concessions and compromises were required of all. Almost all political groups agreed not to talk about the war and its atrocities.<sup>39</sup>

Consequently, the new leaders had to be particularly careful with their decisions, explaining their choice for conciliation, which is different from reconciliation. Conciliation, taken from the Latin word *conciliare*, means bringing together two opposed sides into a

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<sup>30</sup> A. Cazorla, *Fear and Progress: Ordinary Lives in Franco's Spain, 1939-1975* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 4.

<sup>31</sup> Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 8.

<sup>32</sup> Alba, 177.

<sup>33</sup> Richards, *A Time of Silence*, 25.

<sup>34</sup> J. Casanova, "History and Memory: a New Social Dimension," *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 21 no. 3 (2008): 195.

<sup>35</sup> Alba, 297.

<sup>36</sup> S.G. Payne, *The Franco Regime 1936-1975* (London: Phoenix Press, 1987), 640.

<sup>37</sup> Cazorla, *Fear and Progress*, 173.

<sup>38</sup> Preston, 324.

<sup>39</sup> J.F. Coverdale, *The Political Transformation of Spain After Franco* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1979), 136.



working relationship whilst continuing to recognize the existence of two sides and their fundamental differences and disagreements. Reconciliation goes further than this, adding an extra dimension to this bringing together, namely the overcoming of opposition between two sides settling the differences between them.<sup>40</sup> The former reflects the situation of Spain during the Transition best. The new model could not be constructed against the Francoists since they were part of the process and necessary for a consensus of powers.<sup>41</sup>

Under the circumstances of fearing a new Civil War, it is likely that solutions may be accepted that are not entirely satisfactory to all of the parties involved. The absence of measures of political justice and public debate cannot be explained without taking into account social and political perceptions strongly affected by traumatic memory and the accompanying fear of repetition. It was the objective of the government not to polarize public opinion again or further.<sup>42</sup> It was telling that the amnesty law actually passed without much debate in Parliament nor in Congress, the focus was entirely on pardoning and forgetting.<sup>43</sup> No particular social or political group was to carry the moral responsibility for the war or the postwar repression. The war was now looked upon as a time of ‘collective madness’, all Spaniards were somehow to blame.<sup>44</sup>

The word amnesia has often been referred to, but it might be not the best choice. First, to willingly forget something, or not to speak about it, is different from amnesia which is involuntary. Second, as has been proved in the first section, traumatic memories tend not to be forgotten, on the contrary, traumas tend to be remembered particularly specifically. Thus, it was an act of amnesty, an agreement of covering up a part of history, but not a process of amnesia. This is noteworthy because it explains that although the traumatic memory of the vanquished had to submerge for a while, it was bound to surface one day or another.

Until today, successive governments tried to prevent reopening old wounds by being cautious when it came to funding commemorations, excavations, and research connected to the war.<sup>45</sup> However, since more or less a decade there has emerged a popular movement in favor of the detailed reconstruction of the war and Franco’s dictatorship at a local level. A series of organizations and associations dedicated themselves to what became to be called ‘the recovery of historical memory’.<sup>46</sup> There are several arguments why this movement came to the surface now. One of them is that democracy seemed to have sufficiently consolidated to be able to withstand a serious debate about the Civil War and its consequences. Another reason of the will to know the truth now, was that a new generation was born. The first generation of the Civil War was killed or imprisoned, the second one silenced by fear. It were now the victims’ grandchildren who wanted to know the truth. The old wounds of the Civil War were not their own. The youth was shocked by the fact that they learned about Milosevic’ crimes in Serbia, but did know next to nothing of the scope of Franco’s crimes.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, ‘only’ twenty-five years have passed since the

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<sup>40</sup> G. Blakeley, “Digging up Spain’s Past: Consequences of Truth and Reconciliation,” *Democratization* 12 no. 1 (2005): 53.

<sup>41</sup> Cardús i Ros, 24.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>44</sup> M. Richards, “Grand Narratives, Collective Memory, and Social History: Public Uses of the Past in Postwar Spain,” in *Unearthing Franco’s Legacy: Mass Graves and the Recovery of Historical Memory in Spain*, ed. C. Jerez-Farrán and S. Amago (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 135.

<sup>45</sup> Preston, 11.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>47</sup> M. Armengou, “Investigative Journalism as a Tool for Recovering Historical Memory,” in *Unearthing Franco’s Legacy: Mass Graves and the Recovery of Historical Memory in Spain*, ed. C. Jerez-Farrán and S. Amago (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 162.

dictatorship, the equivalent of a generation and the time it usually takes to face the uncomfortable aspects of the past.<sup>48</sup>

The concept of recovering memory had a profound impact on a people whose collective memories was repressed for many decades. Surely the movement for the recovery of memory had considerable influence. Exhumations started to dominate newspapers and magazines.<sup>49</sup> By summer 2008, 171 burial sites had been excavated and a total of 4,054 bodies exhumed. Mass graves dug up with the help of the memory of survivors establish new overriding memories, which reorganize the relevance of the past.<sup>50</sup> A corpse in itself has no readily available meaning. Contexts must be constructed to give it a time, cause of death, or significance. Consequently, mass graves play a large role in the concern over not only whether the past should be remembered, but more importantly, how to remember its violence and repression.<sup>51</sup> Because of this, it is relevant how politics deal with this part of 'recovering memories'.

At the start of the century, the new government partly turned its back on the Pact of Silence and started to support this with a new law on the recovery of the historical memory in 2006. This law would provide support for the survivors and the removal of (some) monuments that glorified one of the battling parties.<sup>52</sup> Symbolic reparations started, such as acts of moral rehabilitation and public recognition, as well as material reparations such as pensions for the survivors or for the family of the dead.<sup>53</sup> The return of the 'vanquished' in the public space is the inevitable result of the Transition as Spain replaced its repressive dictatorship with a constitutional democracy, but did so without working through the past self-critically.<sup>54</sup> The amnesty law of 1977 was only a delay of matters. Only by recovering the repressed memories could a real process of healing and conciliation take root in a society that had been prevented from facing past traumas.

On the other hand, the old Pact of Silence was still visible in the new law on the historical memory. In order not to 'open old wounds' it mainly aimed at truth, not justice, which was heavily criticized by organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. However, the people wanted to recover truth and recover the past, not to look for guilty parties.<sup>55</sup> The organizations that had dedicated themselves to the recovery of memory refused to be subject of party politics and claimed to be recovering the memory of all sides of war.<sup>56</sup> Thus, in Spain consensus was still at the basis of politics of memory and it still remains there until the present day. The difference with the Transition after Franco's death is that now there is spoken about how to act upon the recovery of memory.

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<sup>48</sup> A. Cenarro, "Francoist nostalgia and memories of the Spanish Civil War," *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 21 no. 3 (2008): 214.

<sup>49</sup> Preston, 13.

<sup>50</sup> J. Ramon, "The Weight of Memory and the Lightness of Oblivion: The Dead of the Spanish Civil War," in *Unearthing Franco's Legacy: Mass Graves and the Recovery of Historical Memory in Spain*, ed. C. Jerez-Farrán and S. Amago, (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 234.

<sup>51</sup> A.E. Hardcastle, "El documental es un arma cargada de pasado": Representation in Documentary and Testimony," in *Unearthing Franco's Legacy: Mass Graves and the Recovery of Historical Memory in Spain*, ed. C. Jerez-Farrán and S. Amago, ( Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 149.

<sup>52</sup> E. Storm, "Het Democratische Spanje, 1975-2011," in *Het Land van Don Quichot: de Spanjaarden en hun Geschiedenis*, ed. R. Fagel and E. Storm (Amsterdam: Athenaeum-Polak & Van Genneep, 2011), 350. For a more complete account of the contents of the law on the historical memory, see: O. Encarnación, "Reconciliation after Democratization: Coping with the Past in Spain," *Political Science Quarterly* 123 no. 3 (2008): 435-459.

<sup>53</sup> Aguilar, "Justice, Politics, Memory, and Democratization in the Southern Cone," 112.

<sup>54</sup> C. Jerez-Farrán and S. Amago, eds., *Unearthing Franco's Legacy: Mass Graves and the Recovery of Historical Memory in Spain* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 4.

<sup>55</sup> M. Elkin, "Opening Franco's Graves," *Newsweek* Archaeology, September/October 2006, 43.

<sup>56</sup> G. Hermann, "Mass Graves on Spanish TV: A Tale of Two Documentaries," in *Unearthing Franco's Legacy: Mass Graves and the Recovery of Historical Memory in Spain*, ed. C. Jerez-Farrán and S. Amago, (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010) 171.

However, this mostly occurs within intensive and unfriendly debates, which instead of breaking the silence leads to the exact opposite, the perseverance of the status quo that during the Transition laid down the fundament for a democratic government and constitution.

### 3) *Opening up to a European identity: Civil war, dictatorship, and Transition: unifying components?*

When Franco's regime fell Spain looked with honor and satisfaction upon 'entering Europe', membership of the European Community. After the nationalistic rhetoric of Franco a tolerant 'European Spain' was welcomed.<sup>57</sup> It led to a quick accession of Spain in international organizations, relieving the need to come to terms with the past.<sup>58</sup> In foreign policy of Spain during the 1980s everything pointed to accession to the European Community, Spanish leaders were united in their agreement that economic modernization and democratic consolidation could come only through participation.<sup>59</sup> The majority of them thought the original sin of the Franco regime was that it kept Spain isolated and backwards. Since the Socialists finally 'got their voice back' after the death of Franco, they could now legally express their pro-European ideas. At the same time, virtually the entire opposition understood that Spain had to construct a democratic political system before any serious thought could be given to social and economic transformation in the country.<sup>60 61</sup>

It is clear that, had Franco still lived, foreign policy would have been remarkably different and no transition to democracy would have been made during this particular period. In 1962 a group of Spanish democrats, some of them in exile, went to the Congress of the European Movement in Munich and said that Spain would commit itself to create democratic institutions. Franco's reaction was harsh and he mobilized all the communication media at his disposal to discredit the Munich meeting, stating that those present were a handful of losers and traitors without any reputation or influence.<sup>62</sup> Thus, the democratically elaborated and voted Constitution represents a clear discontinuity with respect to former periods.

Already before Spain's accession it was clear that the economic advantages were not that significant as expected for Spain, since a lot of restrictions would be put upon them. However, it was the enthusiasm for the normative element of the EC as a source of democracy that still came up against the economic realities.<sup>63</sup> Spanish European policy was, to a large extent, shaped by Spain's domestic politics, being in itself a consequence of the historical process in Spain and the historical memory. It is telling that Spain became a regular member of the EC so quickly after Franco's death. Beforehand, it was feared both within and outside Spain that the legacy of isolationism established before and during the

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<sup>57</sup> P. Jáuregui, "Europeanism versus Africanism: Europe as a Symbol of Modernity and Democratic Renewal in Spain," in *The Meaning of Europe*, ed. M. Malmberg and B. Stråth, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 77.

<sup>58</sup> C. Powell, "The United States and Spain. From Franco to Juan Carlos," in *Transformed, the late Franco dictatorship, 1959-1975*, ed. N. Townson (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 234.

<sup>59</sup> M.P. Marks, *The Formation of European Policy in Post-Franco Spain* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1997), 2.

<sup>60</sup> Coverdale, 137.

<sup>61</sup> J. Vidal-Beneyto, "The Construction of Collective Memory: From Franco to Democracy," *Diogenes* 51 (2004): 19.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>63</sup> Marks, 81.

Franco dictatorship would make this a difficult process.<sup>64</sup> The opening up of new public spaces fostered the emergence of community memory, enabling people to perform a different reading of their past, and hence to have the opportunity to construct a new identity.<sup>65</sup> Although it never buried it, democratic support reduced the impact between the right and the left that polarized Spain's political history.<sup>66</sup> All forms of political action were aimed at avoiding opening wounds and the repetition of war suited democracy.<sup>67</sup> A democratic outcome based on amnesty and conciliation was considered the best option.

A basic message was that 'adversary' was to replace 'enemy', because it is possible to sustain dialogue and negotiation with a political adversary, whilst the only result of continuing to view opponents as an enemy would be civil war.<sup>68</sup> Negotiation and consensus are central to democracy. Even with all distrust in Spanish society for political parties after their experience with them in the 1930s, they became a resounding success. A survey shows that after a couple of years, in 1990, already 76 percent of the Spaniards thought that the current democratic period was, politically, the time when Spain was best off. 'Only' 8 percent thought that it was the Franco era.<sup>69</sup> It seemed as if decades after the first stages of recovery of trauma, society was ready for next stages.<sup>70</sup>

It then can be concluded that the death of Franco and the subsequent democratic transition opened up Spain to Europe and a European identity. It was a true break with the past, not going exactly according to what Franco had planned to happen after this death.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

When Francisco Franco died on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1975 after being 3 weeks in a coma, Spain experienced an absolute break with its past. For decades, the post-war division of Spanish society into victors and vanquished was deliberately designed to keep the memory of the Civil War alive in order to legitimize a dictatorial power. People spoke less and less of politics as a consequence of the preoccupation with finding enough to eat. Such a painful experience permanently reshapes an individual's world, and consequently the collective memory. Ultimately, that collective memory passed through next generations, and although victim to another interpretation, experiences in this way become part of a transmitted collective memory, which is still very much alive and influential. More than 70 percent of the Spanish population had not lived through the Civil War, but the trauma still remained. Except for having many negative consequences, this trauma united Spain in another way.

Throughout the paper it has been shown how politics of memory influenced the construction of individual and collective identities in Spain. Trauma and politics of memory

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<sup>64</sup> Marks, 121.

<sup>65</sup> Cenarro, "Memory beyond the Public Sphere," 185.

<sup>66</sup> M. Torcal, "The Origins of Democratic Support in Post-Franco Spain: Learning to be a Democrat under Authoritarian Rule?" in *Transformed, the late Franco dictatorship, 1959-1975*, ed. N. Townson (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 220.

<sup>67</sup> Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 165.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>69</sup> P. Aguilar and C. Humblebæk, "Collective Memory and National Identity in the Spanish Democracy; the Legacies of Francoism and the Civil War," *History & Memory* 14 no. 1/2 (2002): 145.

<sup>70</sup> S. Dibble Harris, "Voices from a Wound: Recovery from Trauma in Spanish Narratives of Memory Since 1966," (PhD diss., University of California, 2008), 274.

provided an adequate model for understanding the belated appearance of the repressed memories in Spain. A true collective memory in Spain surfaced when most groups saw the idea of 'never again' as the absolute priority, meaning that concessions and compromises were required of all, although the society was extremely polarized for nearly forty years. It led to a wide conciliation, which means bringing together two opposed sides into a working relationship whilst continuing to recognize the existence of two sides and their fundamental differences and disagreements. This outcome was the ideal ground for a democratic outcome based on amnesty for all. Democratic support reduced the impact between the right and the left that polarized Spain's political history. Spanish European policy was, to a large extent, shaped by Spain's domestic consensus politics during the Transition. The results of this research established that Spain needed to recover minority identities in order to open itself to a European identity. The Transition period was a crucial step in doing so, uniting Spanish society behind the concept of democracy.

However, the process of curing the traumatic memory in Spain is not at all finished. Although the traumatic memory of the vanquished had to submerge for a while, it was bound to surface one day or another. The amnesty law of 1977 was only a delay of matters. Thus, only by recovering the repressed memories could a real process of healing and conciliation take root in a society that had been prevented from facing past traumas. There will never be any forgetting and pardoning without justice because time does not heal wounds that have not fully healed yet, and the social division created by Franco's unconditional victory continues to shape the collective behavior of Spaniards.<sup>71</sup> Failure to treat the past in a frank and fearless manner has grave consequences for the country's democratic health. The freedom to recall the past should be a basic human right and the cornerstone of any society that claims to be free. Democracy does not mean living happily ever after with those you love, but learning to live nonviolently with those you would rather not live with and who may fill you with terror.<sup>72</sup> To do this, one needs to know about the events that caused this terror. A society can only aspire to look into the future unburdened if it manages to restore objective memory by lifting all sorts of social and psychological pressures keeping the trauma in place.<sup>73</sup> The passing of time does not decrease the need for reparations for the victims. They have the right to know the truth about the crimes of which they were victims. Efforts to overcome cultural trauma and to seek mutual understanding between different socio-political groups brings about the possibility of a collective reconciliation<sup>74</sup>, instead of conciliation only.

Experts have been talking about a necessary second transition which could be reached through notions of communicability, expression and memory derived from the psychoanalytical theory of trauma.<sup>75</sup> Instead, the Transition might never have finished yet. Although many efforts have been made in order to silence the, it is evident that the Spanish Civil War continues intruding contemporary politics,<sup>76</sup> of which an example was given by the way the Spanish society reacted to the 2004 metro bombings in Madrid. After these attacks, Spain was divided over the questions of the perpetrator along the exact same social division that was created by dictator Franco. The task now at hand is not to stir up the ashes, but to investigate, demonstrate and remember what the Civil War truly was, a

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<sup>71</sup> Ramon, 223.

<sup>72</sup> J. Labanyi, "Testimonies of Repression: Methodological and Political Issues," in *Unearthing Franco's Legacy: Mass Graves and the Recovery of Historical Memory in Spain*, ed. C. Jerez-Farrán and S. Amago, (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 193.

<sup>73</sup> A. Ibarrola, "From a Traumatic Past to a Constructive Future: The Spanish Transition Period as a Case Study," (unfinished paper presented at the Conference of Euroculture, Groningen, Netherlands, 2010), 2.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>75</sup> Gómez, 219.

<sup>76</sup> M. Zapico Barbeito, "Investigating the Crimes of the Franco Regime: Legal Possibilities, Obligations of the Spanish State and Duties Towards the Victims," *International Criminal Law Review* 10 (2010): 264.

traumatic experience of mass suffering, in which there few winners and many losers. As Francisco Espinosa Maestre, a dedicated historian of the Franco repression, put it, “oblivion is not the same as reconciliation and memory is not the same as revenge”<sup>77</sup>. How this task is to be executed, is material for further research.

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<sup>77</sup> Cited in Preston, 16.

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