

Memory and History in Shaping National Identity in Spain

Katerina Papaioannou

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study is to highlight the decisive role that the management of history and memory, as well as forgetting, can play in the creation of a nation-state's national identity. From the time the nation-state emerged, the importance and definition of memory has been of utmost importance since it determined the very existence of the nation-state. In this study, the case of Spain is analyzed since it is a typical example of a country that based its existence as a unitary state on the development of a historiography that took the past of the entire Iberian Peninsula as a unified one. After presenting and analyzing the process of the creation of the Spanish collective identity from the 19th century, which was absolutely decisive for the creation of the Spanish national identity, the analysis continues in the more recent period. The way in which the Spanish regime managed historical memory is analyzed according to the objectives it pursued in each period of time, both after the victory of Franco and the implementation of his repressive regime, and after the end of the dictatorship and the advent of democracy in the country. It shows the different phases that Spanish society itself went through in difficult times, and how, through various sociopolitical upheavals, it managed to function smoothly in a climate of harmony, peace and democracy. Through this study, it also attempts to highlight the role of the historian, various other actors and ultimately the citizens of a nation state themselves in the formation of national identity. Furthermore, the aim of this study is to highlight Spain's attempt to balance between multiple and competing memories. Of particular interest is the fact that despite the organized effort made in Spain to silence the past, in recent years there has been an ongoing effort to recognize human rights violations and crimes committed during the Franco dictatorship. However, action to revive historical memory in Spain, despite coming from civil society, remains politically controversial. In this context, an analysis is presented on the management of memory and history in the case of Spain from the time of its emergence as a nation-state to the present day.

Keywords: History, Memory, Nation-State, National Identity, Spain.

Published Online: December 06, 2022

ISSN: 2736-5522

DOI: 10.24018/ejsocial.2022.2.6.359

K. Papaioannou*

University of Patras, Greece.

(e-mail: papaioannou.kat@gmail.com)

**Corresponding Author*

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence of the nation state, memory and history have been key elements in the formation of national identity in all states. The importance of memory is so great that it not only creates identity, but also forms and defines its existence. The case of Spain is a prime example of a country whose identity and memory are in a state of constant search. The Spanish national identity has developed on a historiographical basis which takes as a unified basis the past of the entire Iberian Peninsula. Since the 19th century and the construction of the first unified state with a real organization, there have been successive phases of reforming a common past in order to consolidate a homogeneous Spanish memory among its citizens. In the 20th century, which has been particularly turbulent for Spain, historical memory has also played an important role in state-building, both during the dark years of the Franco dictatorship and the years of transition to democracy, when Spain was called upon to overcome the wounds of the past and build a peaceful and hopeful future. Of particular interest is the way in which an attempt was made to erase from social memory parts of history that were open wounds for Spanish society.

II. THE ROLE OF HISTORY AND MEMORY IN THE FORMATION OF THE SPANISH STATE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

The existence of a single unitary state in Spain was presented from the very beginning by all political and cultural groups as something logical and indisputable, consistently following the method of deliberately and systematically overlooking and forgetting any different cultural or any other national memory. The state cultivated the existence of a long process of unification of different peoples and sought a definitive argument to prove the existence of the unified Spanish nation. Reality appeared differentiated and the ambitions of the monarchies were interpreted as the feelings of the Spanish people, when in fact they did not exist as a nation. The 19th century was decisive in the process of creating the Spanish collective identity because the result was not only a socially produced identity, but had become an element of the personal identity of the citizens through the process of socialization. Throughout this process, the contribution of power, the state and the corresponding mechanisms for the reproduction of memory, among which the teaching of history in the educational system was prominent, was important. Of course, the transmission of memory also took place in other ways, such as art, literature, music, etc. (Muñoz, 2012).

The process of nationalization reveals the dangers inherent in the concept of identity, especially in cases like Spain. In Spain in particular, political actors force social actors to define themselves in terms of national identity, putting all other priorities in the background. This demonstrates the way in which political parties use national identity in Spain as a key element in creating a subjective reality. Arguably a key role in the creation of national identity is that of the historian. In Spain, the role of the historian as the intellectual creator of national memory developed during the period of time between the establishment of the liberal state in the first decades of the 19th century and the organization of the Center for Historical Studies at the beginning of the 20th century (1910). Enlightening and educating society through history was one of the greatest goals and challenges for Spain (Candau, 1998).

With the liberal revolution in the 19th century history became an official part of national knowledge supported by more resources, with the aim of establishing a unified organization in Spain. The state took care to turn the knowledge of history into a patriotic subject, made its teaching compulsory in the education sector and institutionalized its knowledge. From then on, history in Spain, as in the rest of the West, was a knowledge closely linked to the state and the formation of collective national identity, and its knowledge was also a means of demonstrating loyalty to the state. Therefore, the profession of historian was born and developed in Spain based on the process of modernization and was a means of shaping Spanish national identity. It is worth noting that, despite the existence of historians with different backgrounds (state officials, intellectuals, etc.) whose works were also in competition on the market, the common denominator was the objective of creating a Spanish national identity (Rosa, 2008).

All those involved in the construction of history, as intellectuals of a nation under construction, were actively involved in the organization of memory, which was defined from the 19th century as Spanish and whose identity was established over the centuries. The aim of all was to consolidate and strengthen the memory of Spain as a nation, as well as a state and a market. This memory had to be unified in order to give historical arguments to the new political and economic reality of the national development of capitalism. It also had to be a memory shaped in a homogenizing way that contributed to the overlapping of any other memory of the different peoples that were housed in this state. It was necessary to replace the old loyalty to the monarchy, religion or the old institutions of the medieval kingdoms with loyalty to the Spanish homeland. Towards this goal, many writers worked on many fronts-histories, politics, law, etc.-in support of the forms and structures of the bourgeois nation-state under construction. In short, history had already become a battle weapon to support the future (Sanchez, 1999).

The intellectuals as a whole had concentrated the power of written culture in their hands and it was they who were working to achieve the cultural homogenization of a rural and urban mass rooted in very different and disparate traditions that had come from the old regime. This objective was one of the greatest challenges, as it evolved into a slow and difficult process that was part of the capitalist modernization that followed. In any case, these public writers or intellectuals were supportive of the new social and economic logic that characterized the new bourgeois development, in such a way that, while nationalizing almost all elements of the present, they also engaged in the nationalization of the past in order to create a coherent link with the present. Intellectuals from different professions - doctors, engineers, professors, military men, etc. - were engaged in writing historical works, since knowledge of history was the necessary knowledge to argue for the present. These writers occupied a prominent social position because of this role and gradually became the ones absolutely responsible for charting the new cultural course and defining what was considered 'Spanish'. As a result, the writing of history was transformed into a symbolic struggle to control the historical memory that would ground the ideological demands of the organization of Spain. History in this way had acquired a clear political purpose (Tusell, 1999).

A particular role in this new reality was played by the politician and historian Cánovas del Castillo, whose prestige peaked in the second half of the 19th century. Both as head of a political party and as a key member of the Royal Academy of History, he promoted historiographical projects with a strong Spanish

nationalist character. Shortly afterwards, emphasis was placed on the institutionalization of history, which was crowned with the creation of the Center for Historical Studies in 1910. It was during this period that historiographical nationalism received, in a way, its scientific consolidation. Spanish nationalism had the support of the most important public cultural spaces, such as the Academy of History, the National Archaeological Museum, the National Library, the Ateneo, and shortly afterwards the Academy of Language was added, which continues its work to this day with the same enthusiasm (Peiró, 2006).

Alongside the organization of Spanish national historiography, the organization of other historiographical nationalisms appeared, that is, the organization of other memories that linked the emotions of other identities. This movement, despite not being supported by the official state, was supported by other forces and organizations that may not have produced directly binding decisions, but in late nineteenth-century Spain were shaping collective attitudes. These were forces that, in order to structure and reproduce themselves, also used history as a means of legitimation. Thus, at the same time as Spanish nationalist historiography was developing, promoted by institutions under the aegis of the state, other historiographies were also becoming established. These historiographies were not necessarily opposed to the aims of the state, but they too used history as a tool to achieve their aims, i.e. as a means of legitimizing an ideology, a cultural reality or an alternative to national organization. Already during the 19th century, the distinction between historiography coming from the conservative side and that coming from the democratic side was evident. But above all, regional historiographies also appeared, which were gradually revived with the intensity of national historiography, such as Catalan or Galician. Progressively, alternative nationalisms took their place, particularly in Catalonia, Galicia, Andalusia and the Basque Country, which were in political, cultural and interpretative competition with Spanish national historiography. It is worth noting that one of the most important characteristics of Spanish historiography is the systematic oblivion or non-examination of other historiographies and the ignoring of other historical realities.

As can be seen from the above, the importance of using the past was great and was fully understood by those responsible for the organization and development of the Spanish state. It was a practice for its consolidation from the outset and in any case it was a central axis for both state action and the action of other regional groups. The use of the past by different ideological sectors, with different cultural characteristics and corresponding political demarcations, is a practice that reaches down to the present day. A typical example in recent history is the involvement of a professional historian in the elaboration of the different memories of the new political entities created by the 1978 Constitution, the Autonomous Communities. Thus, in the 20th century, and more specifically in the early 1980s, various publishing initiatives appeared, public or private, of varying quality, aimed at promoting a new product, that of indispensable regional or national histories. The list of authors who collaborated for this purpose can verify the participation of a significant majority of the most distinguished historiographers at the present time. It is clear that history, after the establishment of the Spanish state, was once again transformed into an important means of establishing the existence of autonomous communities and of shaping the appropriate elements of national identity (Álvarez, 2011).

III. THE HISTORICAL MEMORY LAW IN SPAIN

In contemporary Spain, historical memory has played an important role in the construction of the state, mainly as a source of institutional legitimacy. After Franco's victory and the implementation of his repressive regime, there was a particular emphasis by his entourage to erase from social memory the brief period of existence of the Second Republic. In order to achieve this, the purge had to begin in schools, workplaces, and even homes and squares. The new regime legitimized itself and paved the way for transition, portraying democracy as chaos and the civil war as a fratricidal conflict. In contrast, the dictatorship had created a regime of authoritarian stability based on 25 years of peace, and thus the parliamentary monarchy was associated with progress and prosperity. More generally, the period from 1936 to 1977 was characterized by the denial of memory. During the 1950s and after the Frankish regime had already shown its harshest face, the extremes (torture, summary arrests, enforced disappearances, etc.) were reduced to a certain extent. However, repression against any other movement continued with the same nervous until the end of the regime. Arbitrary discrimination against democrats continued, as did exile, imprisonment and forced labour in the camps. There were by no means equal opportunities for all in the professional sphere, nor were there equal opportunities for access to education (Preston, 1995).

During the period 1977-1981, both the political class and Spanish society adopted a vow of silence on the past, the policy of amnesty known as the "pacto de olvido". By implementing this policy, the ruling elites managed to avoid any discussion of the abuses and excesses committed during the dictatorship. This policy was also supported at the legal level by the adoption of a law, the Amnesty Law (*Ley de Amnistía*), which exempted from responsibility all those who had committed offences of a political nature. It also provided for the abolition of the offence of oppression under the dictatorship, which led to the release of

political prisoners and thus helped to complete the transition to the new reality. At the same time, other new laws were adopted which offered those who belonged to the democratic party some financial compensation in exchange for the moral recognition they never received.

Spanish society went through various phases after the end of the dictatorship. As mentioned above, initially there was a denial and an attempt to erase from Spanish history the entire dark period of the civil war and the dictatorship. It may have been thought that this would make it easier for the country to turn the page and heal its wounds. However, this was probably not the appropriate way. No matter how much Spanish society and the Spanish political scene tried to erase from the memory of the Spanish people the pain, oppression, persecution and violence experienced during both the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship, this could never actually be done. As a result of all this socio-political ferment, the 'Historical Memory Law' (Ley de Memoria Histórica) emerged in 2007, which recognized and extended rights and established measures for those who had suffered persecution or violence during the civil war and the dictatorship. A thorny issue was the question of the opening of mass graves resulting from murders during the Franco dictatorship. Although the Historical Memory Law recognized the victims on both sides of the Spanish war, gave rights to both the victims and their descendants, and officially condemned the Franco regime, it was not accepted by all sides of the Spanish political scene. The conservative Popular Party and the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) declared their opposition to the law's passage, each side for different reasons. In the end, this law was de facto repealed, as no budget for its implementation was included in the General State Budgets for 2013 and 2014 under the government of Mariano Rajoy.

The Historical Memory Law is a product of the gradual evolution of Spanish society and the maturation of democratic identity. It is an ideological initiative based on international legal standards in order to signal that the modern Spanish state gives priority to democratic and human rights. At the same time, it is a response to the part of Spanish society that wanted a fairer reflection of history and to the need for the State to fulfil its obligations towards the victims of the Franco regime. It also reinforces the legitimacy of political and legal institutions, ideologically moving the state away from the pact with the old regime. (Martín et al., 2008).

The majority of the Spanish population was interested in investigating the civil war and taking reparation measures for its victims, while at the same time wishing to preserve the relics that reminded them of the Frankish regime. The law on historical memory, although it could be described as politically superfluous, has a symbolic value which is particularly valuable and useful, especially in the area of public reparation for the victims. This law has promoted the issue in the collective consciousness of Spaniards, since public opinion was relatively divided on the attitude to be adopted. For this reason, the way in which the law had been drafted, whose purpose was to denounce serious violations of human rights and to make reparation as far as possible for the damage suffered by citizens during the civil war and the Franco era, was of great importance. However, although the message of the law is that all the victims of these events should be honoured, regardless of which side they belonged to, the side of the Republican soldiers who fought to defend democratic values is consistently praised. Thus, because it praises one side and condemns the other, the Historic Memory Act in a sense widens the gap between the "victors" and the "vanquished" and its attitude seems to be more condemnatory than conciliatory (Moreno, 2008).

In fact, this law is a strong card in the hands of the political left regarding the conflict over memory. In fact, it institutionalizes a particular national narrative and tries to cultivate democratic memory. These actions take place under the shadow of reparations for the victims, the hope to heal wounds of the past that remain open and the right to information and truth. It is interesting that the last paragraph states that it is not the legislator's duty to implant a defined collective memory, whereas the law itself is in fact a symbol that has an undeniable impact on the collective thinking of society.

Despite the years that have passed since the civil war and Franco's dictatorship, Spain is still in an ongoing struggle between many competing memories. Each side is trying to construct its own national narrative, using carefully selected memories in order to create the right stimuli in Spanish society and gain acceptance of a particular historical perspective. At the same time, an attempt is made to change the way these stimuli are perceived. That is, in a sense, each side changes and creates memory vehicles in order to disseminate its particular narrative. Anything can be used as a memory vehicle. Cinema, literature, street names, monuments, graves, etc. In conclusion, Spain, both because of its particularly turbulent recent history, the deep social divisions it has caused and the attitude of denial it has maintained towards itself, is in a constant struggle to create its national narrative. Perhaps at some point in the future the wounds of the past will be healed and then this will be reflected in its national history.

IV. SPAIN ON TRACK TO RECOVER ITS MEMORY

In Spain, despite an organized effort to silence the past, in recent years there has been an ongoing effort to recognize the human rights violations and crimes committed during the Franco dictatorship. The demand for a formal investigation into the people who died is becoming increasingly strong. In 2002, Spain was included by the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Voluntary Disappearance in the list of countries that had not yet resolved the issue of forcible detention and the subsequent "disappearance" of people. The Spanish non-governmental organization Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica-ARMH (Association for the Restoration of Historical Memory), which urged the Spanish Government to support the investigations into the fate of disappeared persons, also took a positive stance on the investigations. This non-governmental organization, in cooperation with other private initiatives, has unearthed several anonymous mass graves. Most of them were the graves of civilians who were executed when Franco's troops occupied areas under republican control. However, when the centre-right government of José María Aznar was in power, it chose not to get involved in these initiatives at all, despite the pressure it was under. Nevertheless, there was a parliamentary resolution formally condemning the right-wing rebellion that led to the civil war. This was a kind of moral recognition for those who had suffered Frankish oppression. The unexpected victory of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) in the general election in March 2004 raised hopes that the demands of the militants would receive a more positive response, given that party leader José Luis Rodríguez Thapatero was the grandson of a general executed by the Frankish regime at the beginning of the civil war (Yusta, 2008).

After a long period of silence and no mention of the dark period of Franco's dictatorship, a revival of interest in Spain's past and more specifically in the oppressive legacy of Francoism had already begun. Central issues for academics, politicians and the media alike were now the legacy of the civil war, the extent of Francoist oppression, the deliberate absence of political accountability during the transition to democracy, and the impact of this policy on both the families of the victims and the quality of the Spanish Republic. The 'Pact of Oblivion' (Pacto de olvido), which dominated the transition phase and was accepted by the majority of Spaniards, affected all areas of life and creation. For example, it was the cause of the emergence of an academic literature that almost completely ignored the issues surrounding the widespread and systematic repression of human rights. However, later literature dealt thoroughly with such issues. At the political level, there was a growing interest in retrospective accountability, which was seen as a building block of successful democratization (Encarnación, 2014).

The reason why during the transition to democracy interest in the events of the past was suppressed may well be seen as the fear of causing any resurgence of the divisions in Spanish society. The existence of extremist forces committed to political violence that sought to undermine the coming change, combined with the uncertainty of the political situation at the time, contributed to the creation of a climate of aversion to the potential danger. The 'Pact of Oblivion' removed any risk of a right-wing coup or even a return to civil war. Also, the sense of a collective guilt for the atrocious events of the past acted as a disincentive to any form of justice and truth-seeking. Despite the fact that the losing side had suffered far more suffering, not only during the war but for decades afterwards, gradually the two sides were led to a convergence of perceptions of the war, resulting in agreement on their shared guilt. This convergence was possibly due to generational change, but also to the excessive desire for agreement that characterized the transition era. The priority of the Spaniards at this stage was peace, order and stability, not justice. Interestingly, although the civil war is considered one of the most formative events in the country's history, the mid-1980s saw a high level of ignorance about the events of the war, partly due to the dominance of propaganda and censorship during the decades of Franco's dictatorship. Also noteworthy is the fact that there was no particular public demand to settle the issues of the past. Regardless of the decision of those in charge to prevail in oblivion, the same attitude was shared by civil society. It can thus be concluded that the longevity of the 'Pact of Oblivion' is due to the unanimity on the issue between the political class and civil society (Neumann *et al.*, 2015).

The relatively recent emergence of new politics in Spain aimed at recovering lost memory and doing some form of justice on the basis of all of the above is particularly surprising. The effort to recover memory in Spain is about collective and historical memory, not personal memory. In no way have Spaniards really forgotten the past, but a collective decision has been taken for political purposes to pass on to future generations a particular version of the past, suppressing and downgrading certain memories in order to promote stability and consensus and to promote 'reconciliation' among the Spanish people. The attempt to find a more complete truth, including the efforts of historians to search for the fate of the victims, met with major obstacles, mainly due to the fact that many of the important documents that proved the truth were either deliberately destroyed or placed in closed private archives, making them inaccessible. However, a catalyst for this new political stance was the action of the Spanish non-governmental organization 'Association for the Restoration of Historical Memory' (ARMH) (Kritz, 1995).

The "Association for the Restoration of Historical Memory", based on the new political attitude, began its own action for the recovery of memory. The initial impetus came from a private initiative, the opening of a grave in the province of León in October 2000, containing the bodies of thirteen republican civilians killed by Franco's troops in 1936. The interest in identifying the victims took on considerable dimensions, since the interest of the relatives was great. The action of the ARMH in coordinating the searches and exhumations, and in collecting the stories of those who lost their relatives, was decisive. Its activities became very popular and as a result several local branches of this organization were established (Renshaw, 2011).

Initially, the stated aim of the organization was to find the truth about the fate of Spain's disappeared and to recover the right of families to offer their relatives a dignified funeral. It did not seek, as it claimed, to apportion blame or punish the surviving perpetrators of these actions. However, the position that the task of exhuming, identifying and reburial of the missing was normally a matter for the government and the judicial authorities, rather than voluntary associations and archaeologists, expressed a clear criticism of both government inaction and the terms of the 1978 amnesty. The main demands of this organization were that the Spanish government should set up a commission to investigate the fate of the missing persons, should open up the military archives to facilitate the investigation, and should carry out exhumations, identifications and burials again under the supervision of the courts. These demands received little or no response from the political arena and therefore the early stages of the campaign were mainly focused on private, voluntary initiatives, sometimes assisted by local mayors (Aguilar, 2002).

Two critical developments, however, brought the agency's activities to the centre of the political sphere and into the public eye. These were the cooperation secured by the Agency with the genetic testing laboratory of the University of Granada in March 2002 and the Agency's decision to refer the case to the United Nations Working Group against Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances in August 2002. The presentation of the problem to the United Nations highlighted the lack of interest shown by the Spanish judicial and political authorities in cases of missing persons presumed to be buried in mass graves around Spain. They thus demonstrated the continuing inequality, discrimination and injustice against a section of the population considered to be the losers of the civil war. At the same time, this attitude on the part of the Spanish State constituted non-compliance with its obligation to conduct an investigation and guarantee the right to the truth. According to ARMH, the transition to democracy had been implemented in such a way that it ignored the responsibility of all states to investigate serious and systematic human rights abuses. The aim was for the United Nations to make a recommendation to Spain to fulfil its obligations under international law and to end the discrimination that continued to affect the surviving relatives of the victims because of the denial of their right to truth and justice.

By referring the case to the United Nations, this organization managed to take advantage of the international sensitivity to human rights issues and international law. The issue has attracted public and media attention both in Spain and abroad. The exhumations, which continued to be carried out by volunteers from the organization, received extensive media coverage and many commentators, both journalists and academics, supported this action and the importance of reopening memory. The revival of public interest in the civil war and the fate of the defeated have also prompted a flurry of new books on the war and the dictatorship. Gradually, the prelaunch of memory at the social level began to influence the political arena and find support from some politicians and some regional authorities. However, the ruling party continued to have a negative attitude towards requests for official research and support. The most important political development during the Partido Popular stay in power was the congressional resolution condemning the coup that led to the civil war and recognizing as war victims those who had suffered from Frankish oppression, thus offering a moral recognition. The resolution, proposed by the opposition parties, was adopted unanimously on 20 November 2002, the twenty-seventh anniversary of Franco's death.

With the coming to power of the Spanish Socialist and Workers' Party (PSOE), the scene changed somewhat, since compared to the Popular Party it was generally more receptive to the demands of the campaign around the revival of historical memory. The pressure on the new government was great. A significant event was the establishment in September 2004 of a commission by Royal Decree to 'study the situation of victims of the Civil War and Francoism'. The commission was responsible for drafting first a report and then a draft law that would lay down the necessary measures to provide victims with appropriate moral recognition and satisfaction.

In conclusion, action for the revival of historical memory in Spain remains politically controversial. Despite coming from civil society, it has not been fully accepted by all sectors of society and it has also not been accepted by the Spanish political scene, especially by the Popular Party. Even the relatively modest initial objectives of the ARMH's action to locate, identify and bury the democratic victims of the civil war inevitably criticized the very basis of the Spanish transition and were the trigger for a reassessment of national history. The expansion of the organization's action and the formulation of more explicit political demands raised the bar even higher. The effects of a possible reformulation of historical memory would have been broader, since it would have called into question the structures of the transition itself. The demand

for official recognition of the magnitude of Franco's crimes, impunity and continued discrimination against democrats, both during and after the end of the dictatorship, constituted a kind of undermining of the acceptance of shared guilt and reconciliation that Spanish society so badly needed and that prevailed in the transition phase. The literal excavation of history, in the form of thousands and in many cases unacknowledged victims, revived contradictory and polarized versions of the past. However, it was an opportunity to reassess it and revived public and academic interest in the experiences of the defeated side. This interest influenced Spanish historiography, which had demonstrated an underlying trauma around the civil war and was part of an ongoing reconstruction of historical memory. The revival of opposing versions of history had negatively affected the political regime and the Popular Party in particular. However, the Spanish Socialist and Workers' Party also paid particular attention to the whole issue and reflected on the 'opening of old wounds'. In general, this issue reveals the deep social scars left by the civil war and the experience of the dictatorship and gives weight to the view that society cannot avoid indefinitely dealing with its old wounds.

V. CONCLUSION

After the founding of the Spanish state, history became an important means of shaping the appropriate elements of national identity. The ties that bind a national community together are not only defined institutionally, but are cemented by bonds of loyalty defined by the community itself. The existence of a nationalist and nationalist ideology had to be integrated into the ideas of Spanish society in order to establish the citizens' faith in the new liberal state. For this reason, the existence of historical roots became particularly important. History was the sacred narrative of the foundation of the Spanish community, the nature of which had developed over time as an undeniable reality over the centuries and beyond political and cultural adversity. The use of the national narrative in Spain was a first-rate tool for creating a strong bond between citizens and for shaping national identity. The political actors of the time attached great importance to shaping and adapting the national narrative in accordance with the needs and demands of the times, as this was a way of shaping the national identity of the country in accordance with the national objectives pursued.

A highlight of the 20th century was the outbreak of the civil war, which led Spain into a multi-level deregulation. The crisis in Spanish society was political, social and spiritual. The scope of the destruction following the civil war was enormous. Spain was a country opening a new long traumatic period in its history under the rule of General Francisco Franco (Francisco Franco). With the death of the dictator, Spain entered a phase of transition to democracy with a strong desire to leave the ugly pages of its history behind. To achieve this, it would have to shape its national narrative accordingly and put in place the management of historical memory and oblivion respectively. As a result of the decision by both society and the political class to put Spain's past behind it, a vow of silence known as the 'pacto de olvido' was adopted. This stance, however, did not heal the wounds of the past, and did not erase from their memory the pain, oppression, persecution and violence they experienced during both the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship. This socio-political ferment resulted in 2007 in the 'Historical Memory Law' (Ley de Memoria Histórica), which recognized and extended rights and established measures for those who had suffered persecution or violence during the civil war and the dictatorship. However, it was not accepted by all sides of the Spanish political scene and never worked. In any case, it demonstrates the gradual evolution of Spanish society and the maturation of democratic identity.

In conclusion, Spain, both because of its particularly turbulent recent history, the deep social divisions it has caused, and the attitude of denial it has maintained towards itself, is in a constant effort to create its national narrative. It is seeking ways of dealing with the events of the past, always tied to the chariot of democracy. Under no circumstances does Spain want the divisions of the past to be revived and the management of its history is its ally. The stake for the country is that future generations should be free of the ghosts of the past without ignoring key parts of their history.

REFERENCES

- Aguilar, P. (2002). *Memory and Amnesia. The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Álvarez Junco, J. (2011). *Spanish Identity in the Age of Nations*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Candau, J. (1998). *Mémoire e Identité*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Encarnación, O. (2014). *Democracy without Justice in Spain: The Politics of Forgetting*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kritz, N. (1995). *Transitional Justice: How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes*. Washington: US Institute of Peace Press.
- Martin Pallín, J. A., Rafael Escudero A. (2008). *Derecho y Memoria Histórica*. Madrid: Trotta.
- Moreno Díaz, J. A. (2008). Perspectivas sobre la Ley de Memoria Histórica. *Entelequia. Revista Interdisciplinar: Monográfico*, No7, 247-253.

- Muñoz Mendoza, J. (2012). *La Construcción Política de la Identidad Española: ¿del Nacionalcatolicismo al Patriotismo Democrático?*. Madrid: CIS.
- Neumann, K., & Thompson, J. (2015). *Historical Justice and Memory*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Peiró, M. I. (2006). *La Historiografía Académica de la Restauración*. Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico.
- Preston, P. (1995). *The Politics of Revenge: Fascism and the Military in 20th-century Spain*. London: Routledge.
- Renshaw, L. (2011). *Exhuming Loss: Memory, Materiality and Mass Graves of the Spanish Civil War*. California: Left Coast Press.
- Rosa Rivero, A. (2008). *Memoria Colectiva e Identidad Nacional*. Madrid: Trotta.
- Sanchez Prieto, J. M. (1999). *La España Plural: El Debate de la Identidad*. Bilbao: Elkargunea.
- Tusell Gómez, J. (1999). *España, Una Angustia Nacional*. Madrid: S.L.U. Espasa Libros.
- Yusta, M. (2008).). La Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica: ¿Una Reescritura de la Historia en el Espacio Público? (1995-2005). *Revista de Historiografía*, No9, 105-117.