

Vol. 6 Issue 2

Challenges to Peace in Ethnically  
Diverse Societies: Security,  
Memory and Language

**Articles**

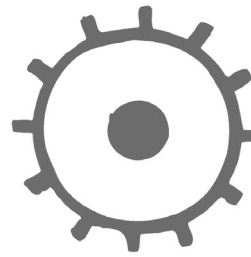
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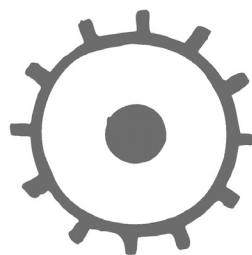


## About JASS

The Journal of Autonomy and Security Studies (JASS) is a peer-reviewed, open access e-journal published by the Åland Islands Peace Institute (AIPI), Mariehamn, Åland, Finland. The journal addresses its overarching theme of peace and security from the perspectives of autonomy, demilitarisation, and minority protection. Each issue of JASS will include scholarly articles that in some way deal with the subjects mentioned above. Before being accepted, all articles have been subject to a double-blind peer-review process. JASS issues may also include other types of contributions such as research notes, book reviews, and information on pending conferences.

JASS is normally published twice a year. As of 2020, JASS is included in the Directory of Open Access Journals, see [www.doaj.org](http://www.doaj.org).

The editorial board invites articles and other contributions to JASS via registration on the webpage [www.jass.ax](http://www.jass.ax) or the email address [submissions@jass.ax](mailto:submissions@jass.ax) and looks forward to proposals on articles, thematic issues, and other suggestions to make JASS a relevant and accessible scholarly journal in its field. It is appreciated if manuscripts sent to us have undergone language editing.



## Foreword

This issue of JASS is released at a time when the world holds its breath over major, almost cataclysmic confrontations taking place between and within a few countries. While we recognise the urgency of immediate threat and suffering, we consider it to be this Journal's mandate to offer analysis and insight into the more subtle expressions of peace work and conflict management – even resolution.

With such a point of departure, we shall be grateful for the many mechanisms and legal structures that within and between states create not only order but equality, ownership, and ways of expressing views and defending interests. It is not sufficient to stay with the concept of democracy as a general solution to all the possible problems that arise when states organise their affairs – even if it is a sine qua non for any long-term peace-building. The rights of groups and individuals may require more sophisticated systems of organisation – from international agreements to national constitutions to local level applications – if a decent level of welfare, protection and development shall be obtained.

Major wars should not cast shade over the myriad of peace-building efforts that people and their institutions carry out on a daily basis. Each country has its own conditions under which such things happen.

In this Issue of Journal of Autonomy and Security Studies, we will be acquainted with a few quite different political contexts and how they manage their pasts in light of ambitions for the future under the conditions framed by their constitutional contexts of self-rule and security challenges. It is exciting reading.

Welcome!

Kjell-Åke Nordquist  
Editor-in-Chief

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RESEARCH NOTE

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**Journal of Autonomy and Security Studies**

**Volume 6 Issue 2 (2022)**

The 1-O that recalled Franco:  
The Civil War and Dictatorship in Parties'  
accounts of the 2017 'Catalan crisis'

Aune Sanz

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### Abstract

The Catalan Independence referendum in 2017 (1-O), and the events following it, launched a political crisis unparalleled to anything in Spain during the last decades. The relationship between the central state and Catalonia is affected by interpretations and recollections of past events: the past motivates action, evaluates them, and outlines the collective the recaller belongs to. Collective memory can significantly complicate conflict resolution.

To understand the complex link between memory and conflict, this study examines how the memory of the Civil War and Franco was present in regional politicians' statements from the time. In total 622 online articles from 2017 were collected from the six regional parties, covering campaigning before the referendum, declaration of independence, and the regional elections.

The interpretations of current issues mimic collective memories, leaning on their assumptions. The recollections of independentists were more detailed, focusing on the Second Republic, the Civil War, Franco, and memory politics. Constitutionalist directed the attention towards Basque nationalism and the coup of 23-F, praising the transition. Both nations were defined using memory, and all accuse the opponents of being Francoist. The main distinction lies in how connected the current Spanish state is to its Francoist past, and what today's independentists and Basque nationalists have in common.

### About the author

Aune Sanz graduated with a Master of Social Sciences from Tampere University's Master's Degree Programme in Peace, Conflict and Mediation Research in 2021. During her studies she focused on civil wars, everyday peace, conflict resolution, and the media's relationship with globalization. She has participated in research projects involving extremist narratives in the Finnish mainstream media and interned at the Åland Islands Peace Institute and at the Permanent Representation of Finland to the EU in Brussels. This article is based on her master's thesis of the same title.

### Keywords

Collective memory, Catalan crisis, Catalan independence movement, Franco, the Spanish Civil War, memory in conflicts, frame analysis

## 1. Introduction

The Catalan Independence referendum and the conflict between Catalonia and the central Spanish state over the vote have been dubbed as the “worst political crisis Spain has seen in decades”,<sup>1</sup> drawing comparisons to Spain’s failed military coup of 1981,<sup>2</sup> known as the 23-F. The question about Catalonia has been central in Spanish and Catalan politics since 1979 when the region’s autonomy was restored after almost 40 years of Francisco Franco’s dictatorship.<sup>3</sup>

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2017 the Government of Catalonia, known as the Generalitat de Catalunya, organised a referendum on the independence of Catalonia’s autonomous community. The Spanish Constitutional Court had deemed the referendum illegal, and Spain’s central government sent Civil Guards (Spanish National Police) to prevent the voting. Boxes and paper ballots were captured, polling places smashed and closed, and rubber bullets, forbidden in Catalonia, fired. Nearly 900 people were injured. The referendum day is known as 1-O, named after its date.

Following a general strike and demonstrations, Carles Puigdemont, then President of the Generalitat, declared independence on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October. The Spanish government activated article 155 of the Constitution for the first time and suspended the autonomous government of Catalonia. After taking on direct rule, the Prime Minister and leader of the right-wing Popular Party (PP) Mariano Rajoy announced new Catalan elections for the 21<sup>st</sup> of December (21-D).

Parallels were instantly drawn between the events and Spain’s past of civil war and dictatorship. Even before the referendum, the independentists and pro-referendum protesters used anti-fascist slogans and chanted anti-Francoist resistance songs.<sup>4</sup> Several extreme right associations reacted too, protesting with fascist salutes and flags of Franco’s Falange party, to defend the unity of Spain.<sup>5</sup> Those against independence, referred to

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1 John, T. (2017, 25 September). What to Know About the Catalan Independence Referendum. *Time*. Retrieved from <https://time.com/4951665/catalan-referendum-2017/>.

BBC. (2019, 14 October). Catalonia Crisis in 300 words. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41584864>.

2 Caño, A. (2018, 21 May). The crisis of the Spanish system. *El Pais*. Retrieved from [https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2018/05/21/inenglish/1526921032\\_857532.html](https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2018/05/21/inenglish/1526921032_857532.html).

3 Dowling, A. (2018). *The Rise of Catalan Independence: Spain’s Territorial Crisis*. London: Routledge. p. 23

4 Bernat, I. & Whyte, D. (2020). Postfascism in Spain: The Struggle for Catalonia. *Critical Sociology* 2020, 46(4–5), 761–776. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920519867132>.

5 Croft, A. (2017, 11 October). From kitchen to soccer pitch, Catalonia crisis opens old Spanish wounds. Reuters. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/spain-politics-catalonia-split-family/from-kitchen-to-soccer-pitch-catalonia-crisis-opens-old-spanish-wounds-idINKBN1CF31X>.

Camps-Gaset, M. (2019). Thinking about the Political Situation in Catalonia. *IAFOR Journal of Cultural Studies*, 4(1), 27–37. <https://doi.org/10.22492/ijcs.4.1.03>.

here as constitutionalists, accused the independentists of a coup d'état.<sup>6</sup> Pablo Casado, PP's spokesman, threatened President Puigdemont with the destiny of the Civil War time President of the Generalitat Lluís Companys, who was executed by Franco's firing squad.<sup>7</sup> An independentist party, Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (CUP), tweeted in response: "Thanks for being so Franco, Pablo Casado".<sup>8</sup>

The question about Catalonia carries past grievances on its shoulders not only due to their direct effects, but also due to how they are remembered and felt collectively. Andrew Dowling suggests that the growth in the support for Catalan Nationalism is fuelled by wounds of historical memory,<sup>9</sup> and Kathryn Crameri found that Catalonia's past is constantly present in the independence debate.<sup>10</sup> It is not uncommon that during conflicts debates over memories surface. However, the connection between memory and conflict is not straightforward, as varying and contesting collective memories belong in peace too. Therefore, better knowledge of the deployment of collective memory can aid in conflict resolution<sup>11</sup>.

The strong linkages of the events in 2017 to remembering and the past have been revealed when it comes to activists,<sup>12</sup> the digital press,<sup>13</sup> and the context of postfascism<sup>14</sup>. However, there has not yet been more focused analysis of how – and which – collective memories surfaced and were used as the situation unfolded, concurrently, by different politicians, prompted by the different events and interests of the crisis, as people were encouraged to vote (or not) in the referendum and the elections. Catalan politicians inside the Parliament of Catalonia and the Generalitat were central actors in the development of the crisis, and the referendum and regional elections hold significant importance in the conflict.

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- 6 Wagner, P. (2018). Towards a conceptual history of the present: Democracy, rights, and freedom in the recent Catalan conflict. *Social Science Information*, 57(4), 588–615. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018418818399>.
  - 7 Bernat, I. & Whyte, D. (2020).
  - 8 Croft, A. (2017, 11 October).
  - 9 Dowling, A. (2018). p. 5
  - 10 Crameri, K. (2014). *'Goodbye, Spain?': The Question of Independence for Catalonia*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tampere/detail.action?docID=1712150>. p. 73
  - 11 Liu, J. H. & Hilton, D. J. (2005). How the past weighs on the present: Social representations of history and their role in identity politics. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 44(4), 537–556. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466605X27162>.
  - 12 Ibáñez Beltrán, M. (2018). Triggering the Paradox of Repression – A reflection on the outcomes of transformative events and framing strategies in Catalonia (Master's thesis, Utrecht University). Retrieved from <http://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/368786>.
  - 13 Wagner, P. (2018).
  - 14 Heras Pedrosa, C., Jambrino Maldonado, C., Iglesias Sánchez, P. P., & Millán Celis, E. (2020). Populism and Independence Movements in Europe: The Catalan-Spanish Case. *Social Sciences*, 9(4), 35. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci9040035>.
  - 14 Bernat, I. & Whyte, D. (2020). Postfascism in Spain: The Struggle for Catalonia. *Critical Sociology* 2020, 46(4–5), 761–776. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920519867132>.

Therefore, the overall aim of this article is to explore this complex relationship between memories and the contemporary conflict by describing how the memory of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and Franco’s dictatorship (1939–1975) is present in the online publications of Catalan political parties during the events between September and December of 2017, and how this differs between and within the conflicting groups, defined here as the independentist parties, the constitutionalist party, and the pro-referendum parties.

## 2. Collective memory

Collective memory is a force to be reckoned with in the field of peace and conflict. It allows a sense of sameness across time and space, unifying and mobilizing a community by developing and sustaining a common collective identity through remembering and forgetting.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, conflicting memories can start and further strengthen long-term conflicts by connecting grievances, both past and present, as the conflict develops.<sup>16</sup>

The concept of collective memory has its origins in the 1920s when Maurice Halbwachs coined the term, describing it as “typically... understood to express some eternal or essential truth about the group – usually tragic.” It is an account covering the shared past, experienced or not by the living collective, which concerns more the current challenges faced.<sup>17</sup> However, collective remembering has been discussed already in the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> There are few agreements on what it exactly is, leaving it as “a form of memory that transcends individuals and is shared by a group.”<sup>19</sup> James V. Wertsch and Henry L. Roediger III approach the critique and ambiguity of collective memory by comparing first collective memory and collective remembering, then individual memory and collective memory, and finally history and collective remembering. The resulting sharpened understanding of collective memory is examined in the context of the crisis.

Today’s concerns, needs, beliefs and goals inform which remembrances are selected.<sup>20</sup> Memory is a product of active selective remembering and forgetting, which support the present identities and explain the group’s existence, implying a certain future.<sup>21</sup> The past

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15 Naidu, E. (2006). The Ties that Bind: Strengthening the links between memorialisation and transitional justice. *Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation*, Transitional Justice Programme Research Brief, August. Retrieved from <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/104776/tiesthatbind.pdf>.

16 Tint, B. (2010). History, Memory, and Intractable Conflict. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 27(3) 239–256. <https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.258>.

17 MacMillan, M. (2008). The Uses and Abuses of History. Toronto: Penguin Group. *Who Owns the Past?* para. 23

18 Renan, E. (1990). What Is a Nation? In H. K. Bhabha (Ed.) *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge. (Original work published 1882).

19 Wertsch, J. V. & Roediger III, H. L. (2008). Collective memory: Conceptual foundations and theoretical approaches. *Memory*, 16(3), 318–326. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658210701801434>. p. 318

20 Tint, B. (2010).

21 Boyd, C. (2008). The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 617, 133–148. Retrieved from [www.jstor.org/stable/25098018](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25098018).

therefore cumulatively determines one's existence today and functions as signposts for actions tomorrow. Despite being conservative in nature, it is not static, but reconstructed, evolving, and contested.

Instead of one collective memory there are several competing narratives. Through an emotional and mobilizing narrative, visual and verbal aids, institutions of learning, the circulation of mass media, sites, monuments, and periodically reactivated commemoration rites, a fleeting social recollection is turned into a more durable collective memory.<sup>22</sup> In addition to speech, representations, and utterances, there are overt and covert silences, which can enhance both memory and amnesia. Silences can commemorate or aim towards forgetting, and be absences of speech or formed by bland or cacophonous talk.<sup>23</sup> Therefore expression does not always equal reminding and recalling.

The 'collective' in collective memory and a group's ability to have a memory have been heavily disputed. Carolyn Boyd argues against the word 'collective' in collective memory, as to her memory outside of the individual realm is "a metaphor for mediated knowledge of past events."<sup>24</sup> Aleida Assman presents Susan Sontag's similar critique: all memory is individual, unreproducible.<sup>25</sup> However, akin to remembering a collective memory, individual remembering too is a process of continuous reinscription and reconstruction.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Michael Schudson argued that there is no other memory but collective, social memory, since the remembering individuals are evidently socially situated.<sup>27</sup>

The difference between individual and collective remembering, according to Wertsch and Roediger III, is the generation of the narration: in individual remembering, it is done by the individual, but in collective remembering, the narrative tools are shared with the members.<sup>28</sup> Individual memories can be tied together and moulded into a collective memory and a political force in a setting of a social movement, simultaneously connecting individuals.<sup>29</sup> Collectively remembered memories enhance collective feelings of fear and anger, and these, with the memories, are passed from one generation to another.<sup>30</sup>

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22 Assman, A. (2008). Transformations between History and Memory. *Social Research*, 75(1), 39–73. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40972052>.

23 Vinitzky-Seroussi, V. & Teeger, C. (2010). Unpacking the Unspoken: Silence in Collective Memory and Forgetting. *Social Forces*, 88(3) 1103–1122. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.0.0290>.

24 Boyd, C. (2008). p. 134

25 Assman, A. (2008).

Sontag, S. (2003). *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

26 Assman, A. (2008).

27 Schudson, M. (1995). Dynamics of distortion in collective memory. In D. Schacter (Ed.), *Memory distortion: How minds, brains, and societies reconstruct the past* (346–364). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. p. 346

28 Wertsch, J. V. & Roediger III, H. L. (2008).

29 Eyerman, R. (2004). Cultural trauma. Slavery and the formation of the African American identity. In J. C. Alexander, R. Eyerman, B. Giesen, N. J. Smelser, & P. Sztompka (Eds.), *Cultural trauma and collective identity* (54–105). Berkely, CA: University of California Press. p. 69

30 Tint, B. (2010).

Is memory not simply history, an account of the past, shared, expressed, challenged within a group? History's ability to achieve genuine objectivity in its representations of the past has also been thoroughly questioned.<sup>31</sup> Like collective memory that is frequently evolving under political and cultural pressures, present-day interest and challenges inform the focuses and perspectives of historiography, and history is challenged, as any science should be. At times, the words history and memory are used interchangeably.<sup>32</sup>

Assman argues that both history and memory are forms of memory, but memory is an embodied one, owned and emotional, and history is a disembodied and separated one. Memory is linked to the identity of an individual, a group or an institution, stressing differences, but history is disconnected from those, providing a universal frame.<sup>33</sup> History does not necessarily achieve this, but it is at least critical and reflective, aware of ambiguity, whereas collective memory is not self-conscious.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, collective memory denies the "pastness" of the matters that occurred, meaning that the past is not understood as gone but present, part of the current, often the eternal or essential truth about the group.<sup>35</sup> Memories can have prophecy-like qualities and might even claim a predetermined end: the suffering is followed by the inevitable paradise of, for example, democracy, modernity, and equality.<sup>36</sup> History's account of the past might be motivated by the attempt to explain the conditions of today or forecast and solve a future problem, but the separation remains.<sup>37</sup>

Collective memory can be colourful and rich, but it is always simplified, selective by its nature. The commemorated and used images and events are selected – or left unselected – from history on purpose.<sup>38</sup> Because history aims at accuracy, it revises existing narratives with new evidence and recognizes complexity.<sup>39</sup> History can be debunked, but memory cannot. For history, forgetting equals historical error, but for memory, active forgetting is vital.<sup>40</sup>

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31 e.g. Mink, L. O. (1978). Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument. In R.H. Canary & H. Kozicki (Eds.), *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding* (129–149). Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

White, H. (1981). The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality. In W.J.T. Mitchell (Ed.), *On Narrative* (1–23). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

32 Boyd, C. (2008).

33 Assman, A. (2008). p. 61

34 Wertsch, J. V. (2008). Collective Memory and Narrative Templates. *Social Research*, 75(1), 133–156. Retrieved from <https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.tuni.fi/docview/209672305/abstract/F8782449B00E4BA1PQ/1?accountid=14242>.

35 Novick, P. (1988). *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511816345>. p. 3

36 MacMillan, M. (2008). *History and Identity*, para. 11

37 Wertsch, J. V. (2008). p. 150

38 Tint, B. (2010).

39 Wertsch, J. V. & Roediger III, H. L. (2008).

40 Assman, A. (2008). p. 61

### 3. The Catalan context

The Spanish Civil War is “the past that has not passed away”.<sup>41</sup> Helen Graham argues that the violence of its originating strategy is still “live” inside the polity and society of 21<sup>st</sup> century Spain.<sup>42</sup> The constitutional polity accommodates many of the most harmful outcomes of the dictatorship and the Civil War, which continue to take their toll.<sup>43</sup> This legacy, the related memory politics, and their links to Catalan independentism are examined in this section.

Collective remembering facilitates the development and contestation of an identity.<sup>44</sup> The link works both ways: the remembering of a memory happens due to the membership. Identity and memory, therefore, inform each other.<sup>45</sup> For example, Benedict Anderson famously defined nations as imagined unities: the members cannot be all present and united in one place and time, hence they need to imagine their collective-ness.<sup>46</sup> A nation is an example of a collective that is brought into being using these both selective and forgetting collective memories.<sup>47</sup> Such a large group has an existential need to nourish, sustain, and justify the group identity, and this can be done with narrations.<sup>48</sup> The events, heroes, and symbols from the past are used to support the constitution and integration of the nation.<sup>49</sup>

One of the most important legacies of Franco’s regime is the problematic attitude towards Spanish national identity.<sup>50</sup> Paloma Aguilar and Carsten Humlebæk found that attempts at a national discourse face many negative connotations, rooted in Franco’s dictatorship. Peripheral nationalists – such as the Catalan, Basque and Galician – argue that Spain is a political structure of various nations.<sup>51</sup> Catalanism sees Spain as a historically imposed

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41 Graham, H. (2012). *War and Its Shadow: Spain’s Civil War in Europe’s Long Twentieth Century*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tampere/detail.action?docID=1340866>. p. 11

42 Graham, H. (2012). p. 23

43 Graham, H. (2012). p. 125

44 Wertsch, J. V. & Roediger III, H. L. (2008).

45 Tint, B. (2010).

46 Anderson, B. (2006/1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.01609>.

47 MacMillan, M. (2008). *History and Nationalism*, para. 2

48 Volkan, V. (2001). Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity. *Group Analysis*, 34(1), 79–97. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247735625\\_Transgenerational\\_Transmissions\\_and\\_Chosen\\_Traumas\\_An\\_Aspect\\_of\\_Large-Group\\_Identity](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247735625_Transgenerational_Transmissions_and_Chosen_Traumas_An_Aspect_of_Large-Group_Identity).

49 Gershoni, I. (1992). Imagining and Reimagining the Past: The Use of History by Egyptian Nationalist Writers, 1919–1952. *History and Memory*, 4(2), 5–37. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25618633>.

50 Aguilar, P., & Humlebæk, C. (2002). Collective Memory and National Identity in the Spanish emocracy: The Legacies of Francoism and the Civil War. *History and Memory*, 14(1–2) Special Issue: Images of a Contested Past (Spring–Winter 2002), 121–164. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/his.2002.14.1-2.121>. p. 122

51 Aguilar, P., & Humlebæk, C. (2002). p. 133

national unity, imposed by an absolutist monarchy,<sup>52</sup> and the Catalan independence movement frames itself as an anti-nationalist movement “against the explicitly nationalist-authoritarianism of the Spanish state”.<sup>53</sup> The Civil War was to resolve the conflict about different conceptions of Spain and the role of national diversity within it, the outcome being Spanish nationalism and Franco’s victory.<sup>54</sup> Anti-Catalanism, Catalanophobia, has even been claimed as one of the key causes of the Spanish Civil War.<sup>55</sup>

Today, Spanish nationalism is still strongly associated with authoritarianism and dictatorship.<sup>56</sup> Dowling explains that this facilitated the legitimization of the Basque and Catalan movements after Franco’s death, as they were associated with democracy and modernity, and suggests that the dictatorships of Miguel Primo de Rivera (before the Second Republic, 1923–1930) and Francisco Franco (following the Civil War, 1939–1975) resulted in the de-legitimation the Spanish project of centralised nation-making.<sup>57</sup> However, one can also argue that one of their lasting legacies is its strengthening and persistence.

Franco’s regime, owing to its longevity, had a unique opportunity to create and develop its own record of the events before, during and after the war.<sup>58</sup> The Civil War was officially and publicly remembered as a ‘total victory’ over the erring and guilty defeated *rojos*, reds, whose memory survived in secrecy in the memory regime’s gaps, limited to the clandestine and private domains.<sup>59</sup> During the latter half of Franco’s regime, a new, contesting discourse of ‘collective error and shared guilt’ grew in volume, putting the blame of the terrors equally and collectively on both sides of the conflict, promoting reconciliation and the rhetoric of ‘never again’.<sup>60</sup> The ‘never again’ has since achieved the position of the most significant lesson attached to the war.<sup>61</sup>

The mobilising effect of memory is often used by politicians, who influence and represent collective memory with their statements.<sup>62</sup> However, thorough historical enquiry reveals

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52 León Solís, F. (2003). *Negotiating Spain and Catalonia competing narratives of national identity*. Portland, OR: Intellect Books. Retrieved from <http://libproxy.tuni.fi/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,uid&db=e000xww&AN=99917&site=ehost-live&scope=site>. p. 13

53 Bernat, I. & Whyte, D. (2020). p. 774

54 Dowling, A. (2012). *Catalonia Since the Spanish Civil War: Reconstructing the Nation*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tampere/detail.action?docID=1188308>. p. 3

55 Crameri, K. (2014). p. 70

56 Dowling, A. (2018). p. 24

57 Dowling, A. (2018). p. 24

58 Graham, H. (2012). p. 127

59 Sánchez León, P. (2012). Overcoming the Violent Past in Spain, 1939–2009. *European Review*, 20(4), 492–504. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798712000063>

60 Sánchez León, P. (2012).

61 Aguilar, P., & Humlebæk, C. (2002).

62 Verovšek, P. J. (2016). Collective memory, politics, and the influence of the past: the politics of memory as a research paradigm. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 4(3), 529–543. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2016.1167094>.



violence and brutality, which in turn affects the unity.<sup>63</sup> Forgetting, again, is elemental. Renan argues that a nation's essence is not its past of a dynasty resulting from an accepted but forgotten conquest, but its members having a lot in common, and a lot that they have forgotten.<sup>64</sup> In Spain the silence around certain issues, victims, and wrongs, which started from Franco's regime, continued after his death with the assistance of *pacto del olvido*, the pact of forgetting (established by the Amnesty Law of 1977).<sup>65</sup> The pact is the Spanish mainstream political class' agreement to not discuss the Civil War and Franco's dictatorship.<sup>66</sup> Thus, the transition to democracy neither included 'truth commissions', trials to judge the people responsible for deaths, torture, illegal detentions, nor purges of the civilian or military institutions inherited.<sup>67</sup> Francoism's legacy was ruled off-limits in public discourse to ensure the transition's smooth progression.<sup>68</sup>

During the transition to democracy the state had to choose what should be kept memory-wise, and what myths should be created. This is common when regimes go through fundamental political transformations.<sup>69</sup> Certain memories are preferred over others: when it comes to the nation's past, triumphs are less valuable in contrast to griefs, because griefs "impose duties".<sup>70</sup> Demands of "truth and justice" and "reconciliation" and oblivion often face each other at odds.<sup>71</sup>

The post-Franco regime does not want to be associated with the Second Republic, its only democratic precedent, as its failure resulted in the traumatic Civil War.<sup>72</sup> Instead, the legitimacy of the state relies heavily on the continuity across the transition<sup>73</sup> – it is its foundational myth.<sup>74</sup> Transition is the core of the contemporary Spanish national narrative: 'spirit of transition' is an epic journey to democracy, where people abandon their disagreements to work together, and this journey is omnipresent in hegemonic political discourse.<sup>75</sup>

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63 Renan, E. (1990). p. 11

64 Renan, E. (1990). pp. 11–13

65 *Ley de Amnistía*, the Amnesty Law, Law 46/1977. (15.10.1977). Retrieved from <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/1977/10/15/46/dof/spa/pdf>.

66 Graham, H. (2012). p. 129

67 Aguilar, P. (2001). Justice, Politics, and Memory in the Spanish Transition. In A. Barahona De Brito, C. González Enriquez, & P. Aguilar (Ed.), *The Politics of Memory: Transitional Justice in Democratizing Societies* (92–118). Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2001. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tampere/detail.action?docID=3052846>.

68 Graham, H. (2012). p. 129

69 Aguilar, P., & Humlebæk, C. (2002).

70 Renan, E. (1990). p. 17

71 Jelin, E. (2003). *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tampere/detail.action?docID=367974>. p. 94

72 Aguilar, P., & Humlebæk, C. (2002). pp. 122, 145, 152

73 Graham, H. (2012). p. 129

74 Molina, F. & Quiroga, A. (2019). Mixed feelings: Identities and nationalisations in Catalonia and the Basque country (1980–2015). *National identities*, 21(1), 93–111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2017.1369020>.

75 Ferreira, C. (2019). Challenging Majority Nationalism: the Renaming of Streets in Catalonia. *Revista d'Estudis Autònoms i Federals*, 29, 101–138 <https://doi.org/10.2436/20.8080.01.35>.

The present-focused framing of events starts thus with Franco's death, an opening for a shift to democracy.<sup>76</sup> Fernando León Solís says that the dominant interpretation is that after Franco Spain made a U-turn: a rebirth, awakening, successful, peaceful, and tolerant shaking of all signs of the 'democratic deficit'.<sup>77</sup> To constitutionalists, this regime of 1978 equals democracy.<sup>78</sup> It is however the Franco-instilled myth or memory of 'ungovernable Spaniards' that has caused the mythification of this miraculous transition.<sup>79</sup> According to the myth, Spaniards are unable to manage political conflict, which inevitably leads to instability, chaos, lack of order and peace.<sup>80</sup>

The current regime has many more continuities with the Francoist period than any other previous period when it comes to its symbolic practices and politics of national commemoration.<sup>81</sup> For example, the current nationalist flag was restored by Franco, whereas the republican tricolour, preceding the Civil War, is not used.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, the former King, Juan Carlos I, was chosen by Franco as his heir, and depicted as the king of all Spaniards, a myth resisting until today.<sup>83</sup>

However, competing remembrances challenged the silent interpretation of the past: after Franco's death, the memory movement started its "work of uncovering," growing and gathering pace in the 1990s from its small and symbolic progress of the early 1980s.<sup>84</sup> The Spanish state apparatus was resistant to the movement's deconstruction of the Francoist frame of meaning inside constitutional Spain.<sup>85</sup> In particular, the revived nationalist movements of the peripheries ignited the first incentive to emphasise local history, and therefore the local archives and other mementoes. The central state and the peripheries, with their contesting accounts, have since clashed over, for example, memory artefacts, textbooks, and school curriculums.<sup>86</sup>

At the beginning of the 2000s, the circumstances were ripe for an alternative memory regime, that of 'instituted remembrance' to struggle into the surface, urging for the long-ignored victims to be recognized.<sup>87</sup> The 'memory boom' took off in Spain.<sup>88</sup> The new

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76 Vargas, M. A. (2018). *Constructing Catalan Identity: Memory, Imagination, and the Medieval*. Cham: Springer International Publishing AG. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/helsinki-ebooks/detail.action?docID=5355991>. p. 171

77 León Solís, F. (2003). p. 25

78 Ferreira, C. (2019).

79 Aguilar, P., & Humlebæk, C. (2002). p. 152

80 Aguilar, P., & Humlebæk, C. (2002). pp. 31–32, 152

81 Aguilar, P., & Humlebæk, C. (2002). p. 152

82 Bernat, I. & Whyte, D. (2020).

83 Aguilar, P., & Humlebæk, C. (2002). pp. 145–146

84 Graham, H. (2012). p. 127

85 Graham, H. (2012). p. 127

86 Boyd, C. (2008).

87 Sánchez León, P. (2012).

88 Aguilar, P., & Ferrándiz, F. (2016). Memory, media and spectacle: Interviú's portrayal of Civil War exhumations in the early years of Spanish democracy. *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 17(1), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14636204.2015.1135599>.

Boyd, C. (2008).

Association for the Recuperation of Historical Memory linked the local and provincial mass grave excavation initiatives together, and this time the media followed and covered the projects.<sup>89</sup> Literature on the Civil War “flooded the market”.<sup>90</sup> Demands for memory policies and recognition emerged: many of the younger generations preferred to be considered heirs of those who defended the Republic, instead of the heirs of transition.<sup>91</sup>

The year 2006 was officially declared the “Year of Historical Memory” due to parliamentary discussions and voting on legislation for honouring and recovering victims of the Civil War and the dictatorship, the Historical Memory Law,<sup>92</sup> which was enacted in November 2007.<sup>93</sup> Even then, almost 70 years after the war, the public debate over memory happened in a tense climate.<sup>94</sup>

One of the law’s effects was that local units were instructed on the exhumation of the mass graves.<sup>95</sup> Autonomous Communities of Catalonia, Andalusia, Navarra, and the Basque Country were especially active in the exhumation efforts, in contrast with the inaction of the central government.<sup>96</sup> In Catalonia and Basque Country, the conflicts of the Second Republic, the Civil War, and the Franco era are not only defined in terms of political differences but of those of national identity.<sup>97</sup> Historian Queralt Solé, defendant of the Memorial Democràtic, an institution that manages the sites of memory related to the Civil War in Catalonia, proposed in 2010 a Catalanian memory, which remembers all dead alike, in contrast to the politicised memory of the Spanish state, constructing a post-political Catalanian nation of the memory of the war.<sup>98</sup> The independence claim and the recovery of historical memory go hand in hand in the Catalanist context, showing how the dialogue

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89 Boyd, C. (2008).

90 Sánchez León, P. (2012). p. 500

91 Sánchez León, P. (2012).

92 Sánchez León, P. (2012).

93 MacMillan, M. (2008). *History Wars*, para. 24

*Ley de Memoria Histórica de España*, Historical Memory Law, Law 52/2007. (26.12.2007). Retrieved from <https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2007/12/27/pdfs/A53410-53416.pdf>.

94 Aguilar, P., & Ferrándiz, F. (2016).

Boyd, C. (2008).

95 Boyd, C. (2008).

96 Aguilar, P. & Ramírez-Barat, C. (2016). Past Injustices, Memory Politics and Transitional Justice in Spain. In S. Florensa, *The Arab Transitions in a Changing World. Building Democracies in Light of International Experiences* (56–75). IEMed. Retrieved from <https://www.iemed.org/publicacions/historic-de-publicacions/monografies/sumaris-fotos-monografies/memory-politics-transitional-justice-aguilar-paloma-ramirez-barat-clara.pdf>.

97 Cramer, K. (2012). History Written by the Losers: History, Memory, Myth and Independence in Twenty-First Century Catalonia. In L. Martín-Estudillo, & N. Spadaccini (Eds.), *Memory and Its Discontents: Spanish Culture in the Early Twenty-First Century*. *Hispanic Issues On Line* 11, 35–51. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/184381>. pp. 35–36

98 González-Ruibal, A. (2017). Excavating Memory, Burying History. Lessons from the Spanish Civil War. Between Memory Sites and Memory Networks. In P., Bernbeck, K. P., Hofmann, and U., Sommer (Eds.), *New Archaeological and Historical Perspectives* (279–302). Berlin: Edition Topoi.

with the central state has been impossible, and that the Catalan living memory, official history, and the national mythscape are compatible with each other.<sup>99</sup>

Pablo Sánchez León reflects how the legislation enforces a vague and traditional spirit of the transition.<sup>100</sup> It omits principles of human rights, deviating from typical practices of transitional justice,<sup>101</sup> and it lacks a truth and reconciliation process.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, Montserrat Camps-Gaset claims that the law never really came into real effect: the Francisco Franco Foundation exists, it is publicly funded, and thousands of corpses remain in unmarked mass graves.<sup>103</sup> Exhumation initiatives are ineffective, and the central state has actively damaged these efforts.<sup>104</sup> The Dukedom of Franco remains and was passed to his granddaughter in 2018.<sup>105</sup> PP has been continuously unwilling to openly condemn Franco's military coup and dictatorship.<sup>106</sup> Powerful conservative Catholic lay associations have actively rehabilitated the foundational myths of Francoism.<sup>107</sup> There is a reluctance to cover Franco's violence on the television and radio, and the discourse that threatens those "not moving on" with civil conflict and national failure is still upheld.<sup>108</sup> To this day sociological and nostalgic Francoism remains and influences collective memory.<sup>109</sup> Such legacies and the Spanishness of the State make Catalonia feel uncomfortable.<sup>110</sup>

Ignasi Bernat and David Whyte argue that the constitutional crisis in Catalonia (the Catalan crisis from 2017) has been bolstered by the exploitation of Spanish cultural nationalism by the revived Spanish identity.<sup>111</sup> The nation-building projects after Franco's death have not fully recovered from the foundational sin of Francoism, that is, the attempted elimination of the distinctive linguistic and cultural heritage.<sup>112</sup> The peripheral nations' cultures are assumed to belong within the Spanish whole. One of the most infamous ways the Spanish nationalist culture has practised this hierarchy by marginalising and stigmatising the peninsula's diverse cultures is the suppression of Basque and Catalan languages. Franco did it to weaken popular resistance, and nowadays it is used to ensure Spanish unity.<sup>113</sup>

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99 Crameri, K. (2012). p. 49

100 Sánchez León, P. (2012).

101 Sánchez León, P. (2012).

102 Boyd, C. (2008).

103 Camps-Gaset, M. (2019).

104 Bernat, I. & Whyte, D. (2020).

105 Camps-Gaset, M. (2019).

106 Boyd, C. (2008).

Preston, P. (2017, 3 December). The scars of Catalonia. *New Statesman*. Retrieved from <https://www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/2017/12/scars-catalonia>.

107 Graham, H. (2012). p. 130

108 Graham, H. (2012). pp. 130, 133

109 Graham, H. (2012). p. 127

110 Camps-Gaset, M. (2019).

111 Bernat, I. & Whyte, D. (2020).

112 Downing, A. (2018). p. 6

113 Bernat, I. & Whyte, D. (2020).

Growing new Catalanophobia has manifested in and been encouraged by racialised jokes, victimisation for using Catalan in official communication, as well as the extreme right inside and outside the governing PP promoting a boycott directed towards Catalan products. In 2017 this culminated in crowds chanting “*A por ellos*” (Go get ‘em) to the Civil Guards who left to prevent the independence referendum.<sup>114</sup> The (Catalan) “resistance represents a direct assault upon the postfascist Spanish state,”<sup>115</sup> thus, defined by its Francoist past which is present. Michael Vargas finds that the situation in Catalonia is not only strongly influenced by a rich past, but even more by its active and motivated recollection.<sup>116</sup>

Often previously described struggles over the selection, ownership and cultivation of memory form a part of the conflict itself.<sup>117</sup> Additionally, the denial of identity and the neglect of a collective memory are roots for the often most difficult and protracted conflicts. The group strengthens its identity when it is threatened as a strategy against the forces working in its opposition. In this process the conflict’s importance to the group identities is strengthened through conflict-driven memories, complicating conflict resolution.<sup>118</sup> Conflict members internalise the lived and learned past, with values, emotion and beliefs associated. The chain of memories, connecting past and present injustices and identities can result in intractable, deep, cyclical, complex, continuing, even irreconcilable considered conflicts.<sup>119</sup> Memories have significant potential as instruments in different campaigns, therefore it is not irrelevant which memories are selected, explored, developed, represented, and accepted, or who claims, owns, and uses this past.

#### 4. Methodology

Media provides sites for memory struggles: the collective requires public expression, and collective memory is an inherently mediated phenomenon.<sup>120</sup> Wulf Kansteiner promotes using the methods of communication and media studies to examine the negotiations of collective memories.<sup>121</sup> Collective memory and media studies both examine products

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114 Bernat, I. & Whyte, D. (2020).

115 Bernat, I. & Whyte, D. (2020). p. 774

116 Vargas, M. A. (2018). p. 2

117 Lehti, M. (2016). Multiple Histories and Peace Mediation. In A. Blåfield (Ed.), *The Use and Abuse of History* (234–263). Siltala Publishing: Helsinki. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303497551\\_Multiple\\_Histories\\_and\\_Peace\\_Mediation](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303497551_Multiple_Histories_and_Peace_Mediation).

118 Tint, B. (2010).

119 Tint, B. (2010).

120 Neiger, M., Meyers, O. & Zandberg, E. (2011). On Media Memory: Editors’ Introduction. In M., Neiger, O., Meyers, & E., Zandberg (Eds.), *On media memory: Collective memory in a new media age* (1–26). <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230307070>. p. 3

121 Kansteiner, W. (2002). Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies. *History and Theory*, 41(2), 179–197. Retrieved from [www.jstor.org/stable/3590762](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3590762).

that are results of processes of selection, salience, and construction, resulting in an interpretation, a storyline of events, which is dismissing factors and infused with social morals and lessons.<sup>122</sup>

Robert Entman developed Erving Goffman's framing theory and applied it to the study of mass media.<sup>123</sup> Frames promote a specific "problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation".<sup>124</sup> Frame analysis studies the selection and salience of specific parts of an event by examining the communicating text or image.<sup>125</sup> Frames are used and reused to interpret events and determine appropriate action, which is why frame analysis is useful for analysing conflicts.<sup>126</sup> Moreover, memory itself is a framing of the past. It is an outcome and a process of selection and salience, interpretation and meaning-making.

When analysing the texts, what emerges might be influenced by frames that have either resulted of or cause the collective memories of the reader. As an attempt to counter and decrease their effect, the outlining of frames is approached systematically, through frame elements. Jörg Matthes and Matthias Kohring present the identification of frame elements as a solution to the frame's abstract notion and the resulting variation in researchers' identifying and coding.<sup>127</sup> Frame elements used in the analysis are the ones listed by Entman; "problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described."<sup>128</sup> It can be assumed that some categories of these elements systematically group together, and these patterns are frames. Therefore, the frames are not predetermined when doing the analysis, nor directly coded with a single variable.<sup>129</sup>

The key events of interest are the last weeks leading up to the referendum (1<sup>st</sup> of October 2017; 1-O), the day the Spanish government applied Article 155 and enforced direct rule in Catalonia (21<sup>st</sup> of October 2017), the declaration of independence (27<sup>th</sup> of October 2017), and the Catalan regional elections (21<sup>st</sup> of December 2017, 21-D), called by the Spanish

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122 Neiger, M., Meyers, O. & Zandberg, E. (2011). pp. 5–6

123 Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43, 51–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Linström, M. & Marais, W. (2012). Qualitative News Frame Analysis: A Methodology. *Communitas*, 17, 21–38. Retrieved from <https://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/com/article/view/991/980>.

124 Entman, R. M. (1993). p. 52

125 Entman, R. M. (1993).

126 Neiger, M. (2020). Theorizing Media Memory: Six Elements Defining the Role of the Media in Shaping Collective Memory in the Digital Age. *Sociology Compass*, 15(5), e12782 <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12782>.

127 Matthes, J. & Kohring, M. (2008) The Content Analysis of Media Frames: Toward Improving Reliability and Validity. *Journal of Communication*, 58, 258–279. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.00384.x>.

128 Entman, R. M. (1993). p. 52

129 Matthes, J. & Kohring, M. (2008).

Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy. The timeframe of the sample begins roughly three weeks before the referendum, on the 11th of September, the Diada (National Day of Catalonia), and ends the day of the regional elections.

To obtain and examine the parties' statements, campaigning, accounts of the events and the related argumentation, the study material consists of the online publications of six different regional political parties. The online publications are reports from meetings and events, speeches, statements, press releases, shared news articles, interviews, and opinion pieces, available at the party's website at the time of the study. They are, therefore, if not all originally published there, at least endorsed by the party and distributed to those interested in their politics. Thus, they are assumed to be in line with the party's position. The analysis focuses on the text elements of these publications.

Heras Pedrosa et al. divide the current conflicting parties into three groups. The pro-independence, referred here as independentists, view the Catalan Republic as the solution to the contemporary issues in the region. The second group is the constitutionalists, who claim that the Spanish Constitution and its laws should be respected, meaning that the referendum is illegal and against the priority of Spanish unity. The third, smaller emergent group supports a significant modification of the Spanish Constitution in a way that it would allow Catalans to vote in an effective independence referendum. Those are here labelled as pro-referendum.<sup>130</sup>

The regional (Catalan) political parties were chosen for the sample according to 1) their seats in the Catalan parliament of 2015 and 2017 (135 seats), 2) the availability of articles on their websites, and 3) the balance between the independentist and constitutionalist views in the sample. The outcome was a sample of articles from the independentist Partit Demòcrata Europeu Català (Catalan European Democratic Party, PDeCAT), Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Republican Left of Catalonia, Esquerra), Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (Popular Unity Candidacy, CUP), the constitutionalist Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (Citizens-Party of the Citizenry, Ciudadanos), and the pro-referendum Catalunya en Comú (Catalonia in Common, CatEnComú) and Esquerra Unida i Alternativa (United and Alternative Left, EUiA).

PDeCAT (30 seats) and Esquerra (24 seats) were the two biggest parties of the Junts pel Sí electoral alliance (62 seats) in the 2015 Catalan regional elections. Ciudadanos (25 seats) was the biggest opposition party both in the 2015 and the 2017 Catalan regional elections. CUP (10 seats) had increased its number of seats in the 2015 elections and after PDeCAT and Esquerra it was the third largest independentist party. There was only one article available on the website of the constitutionalist Socialists' Party of Catalonia (16 seats) and

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130 Heras Pedrosa, C., Jambrino Maldonado, C., Iglesias Sánchez, P. P., & Millán Celis, E. (2020). Populism and Independence Movements in Europe: The Catalan-Spanish Case. *Social Sciences*, 9(4), 35. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci9040035>.

none from the constitutionalist People’s Party of Catalonia (11 seats) or pro-referendum Podemos, which is why they could not be included in the study. Five of the pro-referendum coalition Catalunya en Comú-Podem’s seats were of the party CatEnComú.<sup>131</sup> Pro-referendum Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds (3 seats) was dissolved in 2019, and thus their website was no longer available. EUiA had 2 seats and participated in the establishment of CatEnComú.

The availability of articles seemed to be strongly connected not only to the number of seats in the Catalan parliament but also the party’s roots: for example, Podemos is a Spanish party, and both the People’s Party of Catalonia and the Socialists’ Party of Catalonia are Catalan branches of their national counterparts. Therefore, all the parties chosen for the sample are not only Catalonia-based regional parties but also happened to be Catalonia-originated. As articles do not seem to be missing at random, this lack in availability might cause the parties included in the sample to be exceptional members of their conflict group.

*Table 1. Sample: All the articles published between 11.9.2017–21.12.2017*

|                           | September | October | November | December | Total |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|-------|
| CUP                       | 27        | 41      | 6        | 26       | 100   |
| Esquerra                  | 33        | 29      | 22       | 25       | 109   |
| PDeCAT                    | 28        | 17      | 25       | 12       | 82    |
| Independents, total       | 88        | 87      | 53       | 63       | 291   |
| Ciudadanos                | 52        | 79      | 78       | 45       | 254   |
| Constitutionalists, total | 52        | 79      | 78       | 45       | 254   |
| CatEnComú                 | 11        | 8       | 13       | 10       | 42    |
| EUiA                      | 16        | 11      | 4        | 4        | 35    |
| Pro-referendum, total     | 27        | 19      | 17       | 14       | 77    |
| Total                     | 167       | 185     | 148      | 122      | 622   |

## 5. Memories in 2017 campaigning

The parties actively recalled specific events and actors from the past to support their argument. The frequency of these mentions of the Second Republic, Franco-era, and the period after is shown by party and month in Table 2.

131 Argos. (n.d.). Dades electorals detallades de les Eleccions Parlament Catalunya 2015. Generalitat Valenciana. Retrieved from [http://www.argos.gva.es/ahe/pls/argos\\_elec/DMEDB\\_ElecComunidades.info\\_rmeElecDetallado?aNComuId=9&aNNumElec=1&aVTipoElec=A9&aVFechaElec=2015&aVLengua=v](http://www.argos.gva.es/ahe/pls/argos_elec/DMEDB_ElecComunidades.info_rmeElecDetallado?aNComuId=9&aNNumElec=1&aVTipoElec=A9&aVFechaElec=2015&aVLengua=v).  
Argos. (n.d.). Dades electorals detallades de les Eleccions Parlament Catalunya 2017. Generalitat Valenciana. Retrieved from [http://www.argos.gva.es/ahe/pls/argos\\_elec/DMEDB\\_ElecComunidades.info\\_rmeElecDetallado?aNComuId=9&aNNumElec=1&aVTipoElec=A9&aVFechaElec=2017&aVLengua=v](http://www.argos.gva.es/ahe/pls/argos_elec/DMEDB_ElecComunidades.info_rmeElecDetallado?aNComuId=9&aNNumElec=1&aVTipoElec=A9&aVFechaElec=2017&aVLengua=v).



Table 2. Months and number of articles where the past is mentioned, by party.

|   | Independentists                                      |  |  | Constitutionalists                     | Pro-referendum |                         |
|---|--|--|--|--|----------------|-------------------------|
|   | CUP  | Esquerra                               | PDeCAT   | Ciudadanos                             | CatEnComú      | EUiA                    |
| President Francesc Macià                              |  |  | October 1  | September 1<br>October 1               |                |                         |
| President Lluís Companys                              | October 1  | October 1<br>December 1                | October 2  | September 2<br>October 2               |                | October 1               |
| The Civil War<br>* the civil war within the Civil War | September* 1<br>October(*) 6                         | September 2<br>December 5              | September 1<br>November 1                            | October* 1                             |                | October 2               |
| Franco's regime                                       | September 4<br>October 7<br>November 1<br>December 3 | September 4<br>October 3<br>December 5 | September 5<br>October 2<br>November 2<br>December 1 | October 5<br>November 1                | November 1     | October 1<br>November 1 |
| Transition to democracy                               | September 2<br>October 3<br>November 1               | September 1<br>December 1              |  | October 4<br>November 1<br>December 1  |                |                         |
| the Basque conflict, ETA<br>* GAL and the 'dirty war' | October* 1   |  |  | September 3<br>October 3<br>November 2 |                | September 1             |
| Coup of 23-F  | October 1  |  |  | September 1<br>October 4               |                |                         |

October, the first month following the referendum, in addition to the most articles published, also has the highest number of definite references to the elements of the past chosen for Table 2 (52), and like September, has mentions of all these topics. In November and December, leading up to the elections, the target of remembering was more focused, covering only four different eras or actors a month. However, especially in the case of the independentists, the mentions were longer, and more pieces were dedicated to memory. The quietest month recalling-wise was November (11).

There are clear differences between the parties in how the past is directly and explicitly mentioned. The independentist Esquerra and PDeCAT's references to the past are quite

focused, concentrating on four different topics of the table. The clearest example of a drastically different silence is the pro-referendum CatEnComú, which does not cover the past at all, except for presenting one of their candidates as an anti-Francoist activist (María Salvo Iborra, 27.5.1920–16.11.2020).<sup>132</sup> After the pro-referendum, PDeCAT made the fewest direct mentions to the past, and the constitutionalist Ciudadanos made the most, though theirs are briefer. Furthermore, the constitutionalist party focused more on the post-Franco eras. The independentists and EUiA remembered mostly Franco and the Civil War, CUP also writing frequently about the transition.

### 5.1. Past presidents and the Civil War

All parties of the sample besides CatEnComú recalled the past presidents to some degree. For Esquerra and PDeCAT this was prompted by the anniversary of President Lluís Companys' execution, and for CUP and PDeCAT by the threat directed to President Puigdemont from PP's Pablo Casado. EUiA recalled that the President was shot by Franco's regime and the party paid homage to Companys during the 10th Lluís Companys Race and Walk, which was held in honour of the anti-fascist *Olimpiada Popular* (People's Olympiad) in Barcelona, 1936, a counter-games to the Olympics held in Nazi Germany.<sup>133</sup> CUP described how Companys proclaimed the Catalan state on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 1934 within the Spanish Federal Republic and was the victim of the 1940's Francoist regime,<sup>134</sup> akin to what Esquerra recalls in its history piece in December.<sup>135</sup> On the anniversary of his execution, Companys is presented as an example, a role model, who was faithful to Esquerra's commitments and fought to change an unjust world, which motivates Esquerra's representatives to fulfil their mandates given by the citizens.<sup>136</sup>

PDeCAT commemorated Companys in more length on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, calling 2017's anniversary that of exceptional transcendence and drawing parallels between Franco's regime and the current situation. The representatives of the party gathered to pay tribute to the first democratically elected president assassinated by fascists, but also to the dignity,

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132 CatEnComú. (2017, 18 November). La llista de Catalunya en Comú . Podem recull la pluralitat del país. Press release. Retrieved from <https://catalunyaencomu.cat/ca/premsa/llista-de-catalunya-en-comu-podem-recull-pluralitat-del-pais>.

133 EUiA. (2017, 25 October). La 10a Cursa i Caminada Lluís Companys homenatja l'Olimpiada Popular del 936. Retrieved from <https://www.semprealesquerra.cat/la-cursa-i-caminada-lluis-companys-arriba-a-la-desena-edicio/>.

134 CUP. (2017, 30 October). Crida a la solidaritat internacionalista des del poble català. News. Retrieved from <http://cup.cat/noticia/crida-la-solidaritat-internacionalista-des-del-poble-catala>.

135 Esquerra. (2017, 4 December). Monographic: The strength of the resistance. La humanitat. Retrieved from <https://en.esquerra.cat/en/la-forca-de-la-resistencia>.

136 Esquerra. (2017, 15 October). Esquerra Republicana, amb Companys. La humanitat. Retrieved from <https://www.esquerra.cat/ca/esquerra-republicana-amb-companys-14597>.

freedom, and continuity of the institution of the Generalitat. PDeCAT highlighted “we are still here”, claiming a presence in the past and the inheritance of past struggles, while the contemporary opponents were described as the heirs of Francoism. President Francesc Macià is mentioned as a link in the long chain between all of the 130 Presidents – in other words, representing the continuity and responsibility for the Catalan institutions.<sup>137</sup> PDeCAT’s focus on this continuity ties the legacy of the institution’s dignity to the party through the president of the time, Puigdemont.

In its longer history piece in December, Esquerra frames President Companys as a part of both the party’s history and the history of Catalonia’s oppression. It recalls how Companys declared the Catalan State within the Federal Republic of Spain, which was followed by the suspension of Catalan autonomy and imprisonment of the Generalitat for 30 years, naming it the beginning of a period of repression. Following a victorious election, the Generalitat returned, President Companys famously saying “We will fight again, we will suffer again, we will win again,” which emphasises the struggles’ continuity and the collective’s persistence. Companys’ execution by Franco’s regime after the Civil War was described as “the most symbolic episode of this repression.” He had been detained in France and handed over by the German military police to Franco’s regime for a trial described as questionable. Like PDeCAT, Esquerra too highlights that Companys became the first and only president of a democratically elected government to have been executed by fascists.<sup>138</sup> However, the text ties Companys not only as a part of Catalonia’s history and its institutions, and the predecessor of current grievances, but also as a fundamental part of Esquerra and the international efforts against fascism. It is noteworthy that this is the only piece by Esquerra also published in English: the targeted collective that collectively remembers is thus different, more international.

The constitutionalist Ciudadanos referred to President Companys almost as many times as the independentists did in total, but did not commemorate him on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October. Altogether, Presidents Companys and Macià were portrayed by Ciudadanos in a negative light or to denounce the current independentist movement. Both have declared the Catalan Republic from the Generalitat’s balcony, Macià after the declaration of the Second Republic in 1931, and his successor Companys in 1934.<sup>139</sup> Neither of the declarations resulted in the Catalan Republic: Macià was talked out of it with a promise of a wider Statute of Autonomy.<sup>140</sup> Companys was imprisoned for 30 years and Catalonia’s autonomy

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137 PDeCAT. (2017, 15 October). Marta Pascal: “Rendim homenatge a Companys sent conscients del moment que estem vivint i de l’encàrrec que ens van fer els ciutadans l’1-O”. News. Retrieved from <https://www.partitdemocrata.cat/news/marta-pascal-rendim-homenatge-a-companys-sent-con/>.

138 Esquerra. (2017, 4 December).

139 Preston, P. (2017, 3 December).

Cramer, K. (2014). p. 14

140 Preston, P. (2017, 3 December).

was suspended.<sup>141</sup> Before President Puigdemont declared independence on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, Ciudadanos shared an opinion piece ridiculing the independence movement, one of its absurdities being “presidents of republics that barely last seconds” referring to Macià and Companys.<sup>142</sup> While discussing how the obsessed Puigdemont looks more like a CUP spokesman than the president of all Catalans, the Ciudadanos deputy would not put it past Puigdemont to think about going out on the balcony and declaring independence.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, Puigdemont is described as following in their footsteps of failure. Earlier in September, President Puigdemont and Vice President Junqueras were stated to be competing to embody President Companys, in an egocentric fixation, aiming to mimic his coup against the Second Republic.<sup>144</sup> This interpretation differs from how the independentists tell the historical events.

The pro-referendum EUiA remembers the breakout of the war in its article on the 10th Lluís Companys Race and Walk. The *Olimpiada Popular* of 1936 was cancelled at the last minute due to the start of the Civil War. One of the participants of the event’s awards ceremony was Antoni Cánovas, who in 1936 had to change the pool for a rifle when preparing for the games to go and defend the Republic.<sup>145</sup> The event paid tribute to President Companys and the *Olimpiada* organized by civic and workers’ organizations, recalled the start of the Civil War, demanded the release of political prisoners, and objected to the measures of Prime Minister Rajoy’s government against the referendum, but also reflected on other current issues like the refugee crisis, racism, and xenophobia.<sup>146</sup>

In September PDeCAT declared that on the day of the referendum Catalonia will be able to build a country from the bottom up, and this time without a Francoist military in the next room.<sup>147</sup> This is a probable reference to the social movements and the degree of Catalan independence gained before Franco’s victory over Catalonia. The Civil War had a significant impact on the political, social, and economic life of Catalonia, which experienced a profound revolution and achieved self-government in 1936–1937.<sup>148</sup>

141 Cramer, K. (2014). p. 14

142 Ciudadanos. (2017, 13 October). Los camareros del Majestic. Opinion. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/opinion/los-camareros-del-majestic/10049?lg=ca>.

143 Ciudadanos. (2017, 25 September). Roldán: “Puigdemont ha mostrat la veritat del seu frau, sembla més un portaveu de la CUP que el president de tots els catalans”. News. Retrieved from <http://parlament-catalunya.ciudadanos-cs.org/2017/09/25/roldan-puigdemont-ha-mostrat-la-veritat-del-seu-frau-sembla-mes-un-portaveu-de-la-cup-que-el-president-de-tots-els-catalans/>.

144 Ciudadanos (2017, 18 September). Los héroes de Cataluña. Opinion. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/opinion/los-heroes-de-cataluna/9948?lg=va>.

145 EUiA. (2017, 30 October). Centenars de persones participen a la X Cursa i Caminada Lluís Companys. Retrieved from <https://www.semprealesquerra.cat/mes-de-300-persones-participen-a-la-x-cursa-i-caminada-lluis-companys/>.

146 EUiA. (2017, 30 October). EUiA. (2017, 25 October).

147 PDeCAT. (2017, 23 September). President Puigdemont: “La Constitució espanyola trepitja els drets més bàsics dels catalans”. News. Retrieved from <https://www.partidemocrata.cat/news/president-puigdemont-la-constitucio-espanyola-tre/>.

148 Blanch, P., & Gallagher, P. (2013). *War and Revolution in Catalonia, 1936–1939*. Leiden: BRILL. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tampere/detail.action?docID=1481149>. p. 169

In October, Ciudadanos equated the anti-system's – probably referring to CUP amongst others – admiration towards Puigdemont to that towards Companys from the anarchists behind the Catholic genocide.<sup>149</sup> The anarchists' Catholic genocide is the only explicit mention of the Civil War from Ciudadanos, recalling the chaotic end of the Second Republic, and by highlighting the anarchists, the civil war within the Civil War. Indeed, tensions rose within the anti-Francoist and anti-fascist bloc between Catalonia's militant anarchists, Generalitat, ruled by Esquerra and President Companys, and the Spanish Republic.<sup>150</sup> Neither the infighting in May 1937 nor the aggravating transfer of the Spanish Republic's Government to Barcelona, aiming to backpedal decentralisation, are recalled, and their memories do not seem to incite dispute or clashes in the independentist camp.

However, like Ciudadanos, CUP also mainly focused on the uprisings happening within the Civil War, but with different framing. CUP equated the dreams and uprisings of the current popular movement with the dreams and uprisings of the popular movement of 1936.<sup>151</sup> In October these revolutionary dreams are repeated, this time as the seeds of the current population's memory, seeds on which Franco's fascist cemetery has been built. This cemetery is the basis of the 1939 regime, as well as the regime of 1978. The piece further describes transcendence and heirship.

In November PDeCAT justified the memory politics of nullifying Francoist courts' sentences with the fact that they resulted from Franco's coup d'état.<sup>152</sup> CUP tied the application of Article 155 to Franco's armed uprising by describing it as a coup, executed through the Constitution, "never seen since Franco."<sup>153</sup> Parallels were drawn by CUP between the Republicans in exile and the clandestine ballot boxes, as it happened in the same place, Elna, "cradle of the memory of *our* Republican exile," again claiming ownership of the past. This, according to CUP, is a political metaphor and poetic justice; "evidence that a parallel and silent network, solid and tenacious, knew how to get around the siege, using wise discretion, by those who wanted to seize everything."<sup>154</sup> The party also honoured some women who fought in the Civil War. They are presented as examples of important, often forgotten women who fought against fascism.<sup>155</sup>

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149 Ciudadanos. (2017, 17 October).

150 Blanch, P., & Gallagher, P. (2013).

Bolloten, B. (2015). *The Spanish Civil War: Revolution and Counterrevolution*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. [https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469624471\\_bolloten](https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469624471_bolloten).

151 CUP. (2017, 25 September).

152 PDeCAT. (2017, 14 November). Xuclà defensa al Congrés declarar la nul·litat de les sentències dictades pels tribunals franquistes. News. Retrieved from <https://www.partitdemocrata.cat/news/ca-xuclu00e0-defensa-al-congru00e9s-declarar-la-n/>.

153 CUP. (2017, 31 October). Comunicat de la CUP Molins davant l'expulsió del PSC-PSOE del govern de Molins de Rei. News. Retrieved from <http://molins.cup.cat/noticia/comunicat-de-la-cup-molins-davant-lexpulsio-del-psc-psoe-del-govern-de-molins-de-rei>.

154 CUP. (2017, 10 October). "And wanting to be a republic, we have learned to be a people", by David Fernández. News. Retrieved from <http://cup.cat/noticia/and-wanting-be-republic-we-have-learned-be-people-david-fernandez-0>.

155 CUP. (2017, 12 October). No pasaran! News. Retrieved from <http://cup.cat/noticia/no-pasaran>.

In addition to heroes, CUP also brought alive the enemies of the past: as the current movement is the heir of that of 1936, sharing their dreams, PP and Ciudadanos are the heirs of the Francoist military, the nationalists of 1936, as for them the Spanish state always comes before democracy.<sup>156</sup> The same is declared directly in an article that is a call for international solidarity from the Catalan people. CUP recalls that the Spanish state during Franco's dictatorship persecuted and destroyed with blood and fire the highest degree of national and social freedom achieved during the Republic and the Social Revolution of 1936,<sup>157</sup> which continuously seems to be for CUP a golden age the following history and the present are contrasted to.

The referendum in Catalonia was recalled by Esquerra as an opportunity for the Spanish democracy to be reborn, suggesting that the transition to democracy was not sufficient or rebirth at all. An Esquerra representative stated that calling the current dreams impossible shows a lack of respect towards the grandparents and their struggle.<sup>158</sup> Esquerra referenced less the social revolution and more the Second Republic lost in the war. Esquerra's campaign slogan for 1-O was 'Build a new Republic'.<sup>159</sup> The party presents the referendum as an opportunity for the Republicans in Spain – *Madrid de No Pasaran*, (The Madrid of 'They will not pass') that is, the Madrid against Franco's siege – to achieve their freedom against the status quo, Prime Minister Rajoy and Francoism, the regime of 1978.

October 1 transformed from the *Día del Caudillo* (the day of Caudillo) into the day of Catalonia's independence referendum. Indeed, exactly 81 years before the referendum, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1936, Francisco Franco was named the Head of Government of the Spanish State by his military colleagues.<sup>160</sup> The title was intended to be temporary,<sup>161</sup> but Franco adopted the title of *Caudillo* until his death<sup>162</sup> and the day was commemorated yearly during his regime. After Franco's death, in 1988, a hospital named after the day and inaugurated by Franco, *Ciudad Sanitaria 1º de Octubre*, was renamed after the National Day of Spain, *12 de Octubre*.<sup>163</sup> But, in 2017, the date was yet again presented as

156 CUP. (2017, 26 October).

157 CUP. (2017, 30 October).

158 Esquerra. (2017, 17 September). Rufián: "Nosaltres li diem al món que Franco no va morir un 20 de novembre de 1975, sinó l'1 d'octubre de 2017 davant una urna a Catalunya" La humanitat. Retrieved from <https://www.esquerra.cat/ca/rufian-nosaltres-li-diem-al-mon-que-franco-no-va-morir-un-20-de-novembre-de-1975-sino-11-d-14548>.

159 Esquerra. (2017, 12 September). Sabrià: "El proper dia 15 engegarem la nostra campanya més transversal amb més de 500 actes al territori per explicar els motius del Sí al referèndum". La humanitat. Retrieved from <https://www.esquerra.cat/ca/sabria-el-proper-dia-15-engegarem-la-nostra-campanya-mes-transversal-amb-mes-de-500-actes--14540>.

160 Casanova, J. (2010). *The Spanish Republic and Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <http://libproxy.tuni.fi/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,uid&db=e000xww&AN=329389&site=ehost-live&scope=site>. p. 275

161 Casanova, J. (2010). p. 275

162 Casanova, J. (2010). p. 280

163 Pieltáin Álvarez-Arenas, A. (2003). Los hospitales de Franco: la versión autóctona de una arquitectura moderna. Madrid: Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. [http://oa.upm.es/4331/1/ALBERTO\\_PIELTAIN\\_ALVAREZ\\_ARENAS\\_b.pdf](http://oa.upm.es/4331/1/ALBERTO_PIELTAIN_ALVAREZ_ARENAS_b.pdf). p. 112

a representation of honour: this time the independentist CUP advocated for renaming a street after 1-O, the 1<sup>st</sup> of October.<sup>164</sup> This transformation or occupation of a date has been recognized both before and after the referendum, but neither challenged nor raised in any articles of the sample. Again, after years, the 1-O recalled and recalls Franco, but this time quite differently, in the form of an independence referendum and reactions to the state's response.

The independent Catalan Republic is framed as the Third Republic or an opportunity for the Spanish to achieve their Third Republic, as the referendum is about democracy, not independence. The causes of the Republic's Tricolour flag and the independentists' Estelada flag are linked and shared with the audience in Madrid.<sup>165</sup> This not only further frames the current and past conflict as one against fascism and Francoism, but also literally *recalls* pre-Civil War dynamics. The republican-socialist coalition in power before the Civil War released imprisoned President Companys and were prepared to transfer some political powers to the Catalan, Basque and Galician nationalities.<sup>166</sup>

Esquerra more thoroughly drew parallels with the Civil War again in December, with its monographic piece on the party's history and a shorter one on Aurora Bertrana, who committed herself to the Republic.<sup>167</sup> The longer monograph recalls the 70,000 imprisoned, shot, exiled, or killed members of Esquerra, from President Companys to mayors, members of the Catalan Parliament, and the president of FC Barcelona.<sup>168</sup> The past is also referred to when covering a location: while describing the history of the town of Solsona, the article highlights how different regimes transformed it. The Second Republic is stated to be present in the town's wellbeing and pleasing architecture, bringing tourism, compared to the urban nonsense inherited from Francoism.<sup>169</sup>

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164 CUP. (2017, 18b October). Sant Cebrià condemna la violència policial de l'1-0 i insta el Govern municipal a assumir responsabilitats. News. Retrieved from <http://santcebria.cup.cat/noticia/sant-cebria-condemna-la-violencia-policial-de-11-0-i-insta-el-govern-municipal-assumir>.

165 Esquerra. (2017, 17 September).

166 Graham, H. (2005). *The Spanish Civil War: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 5–6, 10

Vargas, M. A. (2018). pp. 26–27

167 Esquerra. (2017, 1 December). Qui era Aurora Bertrana? La humanitat. Retrieved from <https://www.esquerra.cat/ca/qui-era-aurora-bertrana>.

168 Esquerra. (2017, 4 December).

169 Esquerra. (2017, 2 December). Solsona: un nucli històric motor d'una transformació. La humanista. Retrieved from <https://www.esquerra.cat/ca/solsona--un-nucli-historic-motor-duna-transformacio>.

## 5.2. Franco's regime

When it comes to the direct mentions of Franco's regime, the most prominent ones are those prompted by Spain's reactions, arguing that the Spanish state's methods of responding to current issues are the same as those of Franco's regime, used since 1939, Franco's victory in the Civil War.<sup>170</sup> This link is deliberate and emphasised: for example, PDeCAT wrote that current democratic setbacks are shamefully reminiscent of late Francoism.<sup>171</sup> The previously mentioned longer history piece on Esquerra also draws parallels between the current situation and the years under Franco.<sup>172</sup> The party shows that Prime Minister Rajoy is taking away autonomy, just like King Felip V and Franco did.<sup>173</sup> When discussing how Casado threatened President Puigdemont with President Companys' faith, PDeCAT's spokesman asked of the governing PP whether they are planning to act like Franco, connecting the shouts of 'Go get'em' of September and the 893 injured of 1-O to PP, "the heirs of '*todo atado y bien atado*'" – "all tied up and well tied up", a quote from Franco, which refers to controlling the unity of the ungovernable Spain.<sup>174</sup> This description as Franco's heirs was repeated later in relation to PP.<sup>175</sup> The pro-referendum EUiA similarly links PP to Francoism by stating that PP's mentality is based on Franco's heritage, and this Francoist mentality results in the inability to do anything else but "crush, humiliate or exterminate" their political rivals.<sup>176</sup>

During Franco's era, there was a significant exodus of an entire political class to France.<sup>177</sup> Esquerra recalled its continuation as the leading party of the Catalan progressive left and its anti-Francoist activities both inside the country and in exile during Franco's regime and episodes of repression, promoting a tradition of leading the Catalan left through the dark.<sup>178</sup> The Presidents in exile are described to have maintained the legitimacy of the Generalitat.<sup>179</sup> PDeCAT argued that as the President and councillors are in exile and taken

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170 CUP. (2017, 14 September).

CUP. (2017, 27 September). Article del nostre regidor "Per amor a Espanya". News. Retrieved from <http://lacaonja.cup.cat/noticia/article-del-nostre-regidor-amor-espanya>.

171 PDeCAT. (2017, 23 September).

172 Esquerra. (2017, 4 December).

173 Esquerra. (2017, 25 October). Tarda a Rajoy, sobre el 155: "No és la primera vegada que es liquida l'autogovern. Ja ho van fer Felip Vè i Franco". La humanitat. Retrieved from <https://www.esquerra.cat/ca/joan-tarda-a-rajoy-sobre-el-155-no-es-la-primera-vegada-que-es-liquida-lautogovern-ja-ho-v-14625>.

174 PDeCAT. (2017, 10 October). Cleries a Santamaría: "L'1-O van venir a destrossar-nos, però van sortir-ne perdadors". News. Retrieved from <https://www.partidemocrata.cat/news/cleries-a-santamaria-11-o-van-venir-a-destrossar-/>.

175 PDeCAT. (2017, 15 October).

176 EUiA. (2017, 5 November). Solución política, no repression. Retrieved from [https://www.semprealesquerra.cat/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/entrevista\\_joan\\_mena.pdf](https://www.semprealesquerra.cat/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/entrevista_joan_mena.pdf).

177 Blanch, P., & Gallagher, P. (2013). p. 170

178 Esquerra. (2017, 4 December).

179 Esquerra. (2017, 4 December).



as political prisoners, the events remind of the past era.<sup>180</sup> While the independentists talk about the representatives in exile, Ciudadanos protests against President Puigdemont being described in the media as President in exile.<sup>181</sup> However, the party honours the day President Tarradellas returned from exile, thus also acknowledging the legacy of the past Presidents in exile. To counter the moral evaluation of ‘exile’ the party’s articles state that President Puigdemont fled, ran from justice. The outflow of business is however referred to as an exodus.<sup>182</sup>

In addition to the former Presidents, other members of previous generations are similarly considered heroes. Past generations, who would have wanted to vote on 1-O, are commemorated. One of the past champions is Antoni Comín’s father, Alfonso Carlos Comín, who was imprisoned by Franco’s regime but taught that the risks are worth taking. Comín reflected this to the responsibility he has towards his child. PDeCAT referred to Pau Casals’ speech about Catalonia when describing the typical peacefulness, coexistence, and civility of Catalonia.<sup>183</sup> The exiled musician Casals never could return to Spain.

The past is present through the music and musicians of the *Nova Canço* (New Song) movement. They are participating in the discussion and referenced in the parties’ publications, which marks their importance. The movement or genre emerged during Franco’s regime, promoting the use of Catalan language in music and protesting against Francoist repression.<sup>184</sup>

The singer-songwriter Lluís Llach, a candidate of Esquerra, spoke for the referendum and performed his famous *L’estaca* from 1968 – a song about a common effort against Francoist repression – for the first time in a long time in Esquerra’s event just before 1-O. The song’s old age was mentioned too.<sup>185</sup> On the other hand, in an opinion piece, which lists aspects that make the independence movement look ridiculous, Ciudadanos described Lluís Llach as “expired”, wearing a woolen beanie, now “singing to supremacism,”<sup>186</sup> contrasting to his legacy in *Nova Canço*. The party also criticised how Joan Manuel Serrat

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180 PDeCAT. (2017, 4 December). Cleries: “Amb el 155, la democràcia a Catalunya ha quedat en suspens i recorda a èpoques passades”. News. Retrieved from <https://www.partitdemocrata.cat/news/cleries-amb-el-155-la-democracia-a-catalunya-ha-q/>.

181 Ciudadanos. (2017, 14 November). Ciudadanos. (2017, 24 November)

182 Ciudadanos. (2017, 13b October). Independencia sin blanca. Opinion. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/opinion/independencia-sin-blanca/10048>.

183 PDeCAT. (2017, 26 October). Cleries: “S’està perpetrant un cop d’Estat del nacionalisme espanyol contra les institucions democràtiques de Catalunya”. News. Retrieved from <https://www.partitdemocrata.cat/news/cleries-sesta-perpetrant-un-cop-destat-del-nacion/>.

184 Dowling, A. (2012). *Catalonia Since the Spanish Civil War: Reconstructing the Nation*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tampere/detail.action?docID=1188308> . p. 77

185 Esquerra. (2017, 29 September). Junqueras: “Amb la superació de la por comença el camí de la llibertat. Persistiu, Catalans. Persistiu!” La humanitat. Retrieved from <https://www.esquerra.cat/ca/junqueras-amb-la-superacio-de-la-por-comenca-el-cami-de-la-llibertat-persistiu-catalans-pe-14570>.

186 Ciudadanos. (2017, 13 October).

– also one of the most prominent members of Nova Canço – is now called fascist by the independentists, as he has spoken against the independence movement.<sup>187</sup> This undermines the independentists’ accusations of fascism and Francoism. One piece from Ciudadanos mentions that in the demonstration against the referendum and independence on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, Serrat’s famous *Mediterraneo* from 1971 was sung. CUP quoted the song of Ovidi Montllor when discussing the ‘*A por ellos*’ response the voting citizens received from the state.<sup>188</sup> On the day the majority of Catalan Parliament signed a document establishing Catalonia as an independent republic, the same quote “*Un dia que durarà anys*” (a day that will last for years) was published with the title “Welcome Republica!”<sup>189</sup>

In Spain, governed by PP, supported by PSOE and Ciudadanos, political prisoners have returned.<sup>190</sup> This message from Esquerra and PDeCAT, with the aim of exceptionality, forgets other political prisoners after the transition, relating to, for example, the Basque conflict. In an interview for the Greek Avgi, EUiA’s representative advocates for the pro-referendum and independentists’ use of the term amnesty in demands for the release of the detainees. He connects the word’s symbolic strength in Catalonia to the demands for liberation of imprisoned communists, democrats, and socialists, dating to the last years of Franco’s regime. The representative considered it regrettable that it is still necessary to fight for the freedom of political prisoners.<sup>191</sup>

Esquerra published that when one of the independentist political prisoners was freed in October, he went straight away to the first event of the morning, which was held at the old Modelo Prison (meaning ‘exemplar prison’). He would not miss it, as he had closed the prison as the Minister of Justice of the Generalitat that year.<sup>192</sup> The article highlights current grievances and Francoist politics, powerfully showing the power in the hands of the ex-political prisoner. It is also repeated that the prison is a notorious symbol of Francoist repression.<sup>193</sup> When Franco’s regime started to fill the state’s prisons and concentration

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187 Ciudadanos. (2017, 2 October). Devuelvanme Barcelona. Opinion. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/opinion/devuelvanme-barcelona/10058>.

188 CUP. (2017, 10 October).

189 CUP. (2017, 10b October). Bienvinguda República!! News. Retrieved from <http://calella.cup.cat/noticia/benvinguda-republica>

190 Esquerra. (2017, 18 October). Tardà, a Sáenz de Santamaría: “A més repressió, més convenciment del valor de la llibertat i de la independència”. La humanitat. Retrieved from <https://www.esquerra.cat/ca/tarda-a-saenz-de-santamaria-a-mes-repressio-mes-convenciment-del-valor-de-la-llibertat-i-d-14616>.

PDeCAT. (2017, 15 November). Campuzano: “El 21D serà un plebiscit al 155 i a l’empresonament dels consellers i de Jordi Sánchez i Jordi Cuixart”. News. Retrieved from <https://www.partidemocrata.cat/news/campuzano-el-21d-sera-un-plebiscit-al-155-i-a-lem/>.

191 EUiA. (2017, 5 November).

192 Esquerra. (2017, 4b December). “L’Oriol m’ha demanat que no descanseu per guanyar la llibertat. La humanitat. Retrieved from <https://www.esquerra.cat/ca/mundo-apareix-campanya-erc>.

193 Esquerra. (2017, 4b December).

Esquerra. (2017, 16 December). Esquerra Republicana, garantia de bon govern. La humanitat. Retrieved from <https://www.esquerra.cat/ca/esquerra-republicana-erc--garantia-de-bon-govern>.

camps with an estimated 700,000 prisoners, the Modelo Prison in Barcelona had the most lockups compared to the others.<sup>194</sup> Now its symbolic value is particular to Esquerra and the independentists, as its closing and their article brought another layer of meaning to the story: a layer of continued struggle, but also an ex-prisoner's victory over the ex-prison.

The Modelo Prison holds symbolic significance also to EUiA, which reported of an “emotional” posthumous act of homage to Enric Pubill (28.12.1930–29.3.2017), the former president of l'Associació Catalana d'Expresos Polítics (the Catalan Association of Former Political Prisoners) and member of both Joventuts Socialistes Unificades de Catalunya (Unified Socialist Youth of Catalonia) and Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya (Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia). The event took place in the former prison, where the anti-Francoist fighter Pubill had been imprisoned by Franco's regime (1949–1958). The Association works to guarantee the social and economic rights of prisoners and to transmit the memory of the resistance. The article does not tie the occasion to the current conflict, but political prisoners were a very topical issue at the time.<sup>195</sup>

Esquerra wrote that the commemoration event of President Companys ended with the song *Els segadors*.<sup>196</sup> After the Diada, a representative of PDeCAT, Josep Lluís Cleries, referenced the song's lyrics, stating that the referendum would “cut the chains”.<sup>197</sup> In an article describing the Regime of 1978, CUP opens with a quote about chains that can only be heard if one moves.<sup>198</sup> *Els segadors*, Catalonia's official national anthem since 1993, has its origins in a hymn on the revolt of 1640–1659, and like many other symbols of Catalanness, it was prohibited during Franco.<sup>199</sup> The chains as a symbol gather a cumulative meaning of past repression, including that of Franco.

The state's actions are explicitly described by the independentists as reminders of the dark past, where it aims to keep Catalonia. The repression characteristic of this dark past is cited, and that past is framed as that of the dictatorship 40 years ago. Esquerra recalled how, like Catalonia, the party has suffered repression and defeats throughout the years.<sup>200</sup> The rights under threat today were also under threat during Franco's final years.<sup>201</sup> CUP described today's responses of the state as the greatest aggressions against the Catalan

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194 Blanch, P., & Gallagher, P. (2013). p. 171

195 EUiA. (2017, 25b October). Barcelona homenatja a Enric Pubill, referent de la lluita antifranquista. Retrieved from <https://www.semprealesquerra.cat/barcelona-homenatja-a-enric-pubill-referent-de-la-lluita-antifranquista/>.

196 Esquerra. (2017, 15 October).

197 PDeCAT. (2017, 12 September).

198 CUP. (2017, 21 September).

199 Vargas, M. A. (2018). p. 62

200 Esquerra. (2017, 4 December).

201 Esquerra. (2017, 19 September).

people's rights that have occurred since the dictatorship,<sup>202</sup> taking Spain backwards more than 40 years.<sup>203</sup> These actions are stated to be foreign to some of the population, suggesting that others still remember them. The *procés*, meaning the process towards independence, is presented as the only prevention against returning to this specific past of over 40 years ago.<sup>204</sup>

At the same time, all independentists parties suggested that Franco's dictatorship is still present and that this is nothing new: Antoni Comín from Esquerra described that the ones who recently gave him a request prohibiting the organization of the referendum, that is, the representatives of the state, are the same collective or force as those who imprisoned his father during Franco's regime.<sup>205</sup> CUP shared how Franco's regime has continued past the transition, through judges, continued activity of the Falange, the only party allowed by Franco's dictatorship, the repeated impunity towards fascism, the succeeding political, economic and media powers and the links of the old regime to the current political elite, especially PP.<sup>206</sup> The regime of 1978, that is, of the transition, is the heir, or practically the same as the regime of 1939,<sup>207</sup> meaning the dictatorship. PDeCAT claimed the government is run by a hundred pre-democratic families,<sup>208</sup> and the Spanish institutions are kidnapped by families inheriting Franco's regime.<sup>209</sup> PDeCAT showed that while the Generalitat's websites are closed by the state, the Francisco Franco National Foundation is perfectly visible and visitable,<sup>210</sup> demonstrating the state's standing towards these two camps.

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202 CUP. (2017, 23 October). Contra l'agressió del 155 de la Constitució espanyola; autoorganització, autotutela i respostes en defensa dels drets civils i polítics des del municipalisme i l'internacionalisme. News. Retrieved from <http://cup.cat/noticia/contra-lagressio-del-155-de-la-constitucio-espanyola-autoorganitzacio-autotutela-i-respostes>.

203 CUP. (2018, 18 December).

204 CUP. (2017, 13 December). [OPINIÓ] "Cal escollir: entre el 155 i la retallada de drets o la República i una nova societat". News. Retrieved from <http://valls.cup.cat/noticia/opinio-cal-escollir-entre-el-155-i-la-retallada-de-drets-o-la-republica-i-una-nova-societat>.

205 Esquerra. (2017, 17 September).

206 CUP. (2017, 22 September). "Sí", la clau que obre tots els panys. News. Retrieved from <http://cervera.cup.cat/noticia/si-la-clau-que-obre-tots-els-panyes>.

CUP. (2017, 30 October).

CUP. (2017, 2 November). Interpel·lació al govern sobre justícia democràtica i estat autoritari de dret. News. Retrieved from <http://cup.cat/noticia/interpellacio-al-govern-sobre-justicia-democratica-i-estat-autoritari-de-dret>.

207 CUP. (2017, 26 October).

208 PDeCAT. (2017, 26b September). Santi Vila: "Espanya té un projecte d'uniformitat, d'eliminar tot allò que ens distingeix, però els hi hem posat les banyes. Tenim dret a ser distints". News. Retrieved from <https://www.partitdemocrata.cat/news/santi-vila-espanya-te-un-projecte-duniformitat-de/>.

209 PDeCAT. (2017, 23b September). Santi Vila: "Estic disposat a anar a la presó perquè ens hi juguem la dignitat personal i col·lectiva". News. Retrieved from <https://www.partitdemocrata.cat/news/santi-vila-estic-disposat-a-anar-a-la-presos-perqu/>.

210 PDeCAT. (2017, 27b September). Bagué: "El govern espanyol ha reaccionat amb extrema agressivitat, vulnerant els drets fonamentals de la ciutadania". News. Retrieved from <https://www.partitdemocrata.cat/noticies/bague-el-govern-espanyol-ha-reaccionat-amb-extrem/>.

The efforts for the referendum are efforts for democracy, not independence, and the struggle is equated to that of the previous Franco-era generation trying to achieve democracy, teaching that the risks are worth taking.<sup>211</sup> The neo-Francoist state's paralysis is countered using Catalonia's "unprecedented democratic creativity".<sup>212</sup> CUP highlights that the conflict and movement are about Catalonia and the state, which has Francoist tendencies, and not against Spain.<sup>213</sup> Esquerra too presents the referendum as a common solution against the still alive Francoism and lack of democracy, for both Catalonia and for people living in Spain.<sup>214</sup>

In September PDeCAT remembers those who lived during the Franco regime, again bringing up transcendence and creating a sense of collective.<sup>215</sup> CUP claims the heritage of disobedience,<sup>216</sup> and the dictatorship era's independentists – as well as presence by saying "we lived in a dictatorship" – who supported the cause even though it was prohibited to think independentist.<sup>217</sup> The Catalan national movement and the organised labour did not have the most trusting relations before the Civil War, but Francoism, as a common enemy, worked in uniting the two.<sup>218</sup> The left-wing opposition parties and Catalan and Basque political forces cooperated in exile, which aided to motivate the left to support devolution and decentralisation.<sup>219</sup>

Esquerra explains how calling the referendum illegal is questionable, as once speaking Catalan was illegal, democratic rights have been illegal before, and the current laws are post-Francoist.<sup>220</sup> Franco's regime hunted down its anti-Spanish opponents, 'reds', who were not only the left but also those fostering and expressing their regional, historical nationalities, resulting in the persecution of all manifestations of Catalanness.<sup>221</sup> "They call us coup plotters" the representative states,<sup>222</sup> as Franco's regime, the root of current post-Francoist laws, was exactly that, a result of a coup.

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211 Esquerra. (2017, 17 September).

212 Esquerra. (2017, 27 September). Junqueras: "El país està a les vostres mans i us necessita, segur que no fallareu aquest 1-0". La humanitat. Retrieved from <https://www.esquerra.cat/ca/junqueras-el-pais-esta-a-les-vostres-mans-i-us-necessita-segur-que-no-fallareu-aquest-1-0-14567>.

213 CUP. (2017, 27 September).

214 Esquerra. (2017, 17 September).

215 PDeCAT. (2017, 25 September).

216 CUP. (2017, 18 October).

217 CUP. (2017, 26b October). Intervenció de la CUP en contra de l'aplicació de l'article 155. News. Retrieved from <http://molins.cup.cat/noticia/intervencio-de-la-cup-en-contra-de-laplicacio-de-larticle-155>.

218 Dowling, A. (2012). p. 5

219 Aguilar, P., & Humlebæk, C. (2002). p. 133

220 Esquerra. (2017, 21 September). Rufián en reconeixement als detinguts ahir: "Sou la dignitat d'aquest país". La humanitat. Retrieved from <https://www.esquerra.cat/ca/rufian-en-reconeixement-als-detinguts-ahir-sou-la-dignitat-daquest-pais-un-pais-que-es-mol-14555>.

221 Blanch, P., & Gallagher, P. (2013). p. 172

222 Esquerra. (2017, 21 September).

The past is naturally touched on with memory politics, which Esquerra and PDeCAT covered actively before the elections. The memory politics discussed focus, for example, on nullifying the sentences of Franco's courts, and as mentioned, are justified with the fact that Franco's regime was a result of a coup.<sup>223</sup> The parties argued for the further implementation and development of the Historical Memory Law, in the forms of legal reparation for victims and annulment of the dictatorship's sentences.<sup>224</sup> Esquerra frequently described how the elections are crucial for sufficient memory politics, as the application of Article 155 is stopping, amongst other things, the mass grave exhumation initiatives, and their continuation will depend on the elected Generalitat's will. The long silence after the wrong, even post-1975, is blamed on the Spanish dictatorship. Parallels between the current events and the past harms are actively drawn, but the current claim for independence is supported by the Spanish state's inadequacy and active building of obstacles in the field of memory politics. The choice on the election day is framed as one of learning or taking steps back.<sup>225</sup>

Despite publishing more articles, Ciudadanos recalls Franco's era less than the independentist parties (Table 2). The party's mentions are briefer and vaguer too, and some acknowledge the independentists' account. Ciudadanos for example delegitimized and ridiculed the independentists' accusations by claiming that in today's Catalonia crying out for equality is called Falangist.<sup>226</sup> At the beginning of October, Ciudadanos wrote that the separatists are lying to the international community, claiming that present day Spain has something to do with Francoism.<sup>227</sup> Ciudadanos often pointed out how the nationalists call politicians and musicians who disagree with them *fachas*, fascists.

Francoism and Franco's regime were linked to the fate of the autonomy and institutions, the denial of disagreeing positions and the divisions in society, and through this to the independentists. Ciudadanos' next mention of the Francoist past states that the independentists have closed the precious Catalan institution, the Parliament, one that cost so much to reopen after the 40 years of dictatorship.<sup>228</sup> Later in October, the human and

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223 PDeCAT. (2017, 14 November).

224 Esquerra. (2017, 16 December).

225 Esquerra. (2017, 15 December). Les polítiques de memòria i el 155. La humanitat. Retrieved from <https://www.esquerra.cat/ca/les-politiques-de-memoria-i-el-155-14655>.

Esquerra. (2017, 16 December).

226 Ciudadanos. (2017, 13 October).

227 Ciudadanos. (2017, 11 October). Girauta a Dastis: 'Le reprocho la ausencia de una estrategia de comunicación internacional que haya explicado el golpe en Cataluña'. Press release. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/prensa/girauta-a-dastis-le-reprocho-la-ausencia-de-una-estrategia-de-comunicacion-internacional-que-haya-explicado-el-golpe-en-cataluna/10033>.

228 Ciudadanos. (2017, 18b October). Rivera a la vicepresidenta: 'Ante la liquidación de la autonomía en Cataluña aplicar la Constitución es una obligación y no una opción'. Press release. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/prensa/rivera-a-la-vicepresidenta-ante-la-liquidacion-de-la-autonomia-en-cataluna-aplicar-la-constitucion-es-una-obligacion-y-no-una-opcion/10051>.

emotional fracture caused by the independentists was described to only correspond to the fractures of the times before the transition, suggesting the times of Franco's regime and beyond.<sup>229</sup> Finally, the Generalitat's "full-blown coup" and nationalists' disapproval of constitutionalists are presented as comparable to a dictatorship, to Francoism.<sup>230</sup>

In its final reference, *Ciudadanos* recalls that while the dictatorship opposed any attempt at self-government, the Constitution luckily allows autonomous governments, continuing with the reminder that the Constitution received large support from Catalonia.<sup>231</sup> This emphasises that the problem presented by the independentists was solved in 1978.

### 5.3. Post-Franco's regime

The transition was lies and rotten foundations for CUP and Esquerra, and a tale of success, unity, and democracy for *Ciudadanos*. For CUP and EUIA, the regime of 1978 is a commonly used title for the current, post-transition regime of the Spanish state. When referencing the powers of the central state the name used itself remembers and evaluates transition. Naturally, the constitutionalists highlight the value and achievements of the Constitution, which is the key product of the transition. This already promotes a certain interpretation of the transition to democracy, though the period of time would not be mentioned or explicitly recalled.

On the day of the Constitution, in its commemoration gathering, President Puigdemont and Vice President Junqueras were described as the scarecrows of convivence by *Ciudadanos*.<sup>232</sup> Transition signifies to *Ciudadanos* an end to fractures of this degree, which are now reawakened by nationalism. The transition and process behind the Constitution are remembered as a time of cooperation, handshakes between past opponents, *darse la mano*, (also offering a hand, joining hands) something that should be done again.<sup>233</sup> *Ciudadanos*

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229 *Ciudadanos*. (2017, 25 October). Lecciones de la crisis catalana. Opinion. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/opinion/lecciones-de-la-crisis-catalana/10076>.

230 *Ciudadanos*. (2017, 30 October). Entrevista a Carlos Carrizosa: relata cómo plantó cara el viernes a los 'indepes' vociferantes. News. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/noticia/entrevista-a-carlos-carrizosa-relata-como-planto-cara-el-viernes-a-los-indepes-vociferantes/10092?lg=va>.

231 *Ciudadanos*. (2017, 15 November).

232 *Ciudadanos*. (2017, 6 December). Arrimadas: 'El 21D hay que salir a votar con la misma ilusión con la que se fue a votar a favor de la Constitución'. Press release. Retrieved from [https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/prensa/Arrimadas\\_El\\_21D\\_hay\\_que\\_salir\\_a\\_votar\\_con\\_la\\_misma\\_ilusion\\_con\\_la\\_que\\_se\\_fue\\_a\\_votar\\_a\\_favor\\_de\\_la\\_Constitucion/10195?lg=va](https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/prensa/Arrimadas_El_21D_hay_que_salir_a_votar_con_la_misma_ilusion_con_la_que_se_fue_a_votar_a_favor_de_la_Constitucion/10195?lg=va).

233 *Ciudadanos*. (2017, 28 September). Rivera: 'A partir del 1-O los partidos que creemos en España debemos darnos la mano y configurar otros treinta años de libertad y democracia'. Press release. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/prensa/rivera-a-partir-del-1-o-los-partidos-que-creemos-en-espana-debemos-darnos-la-mano-y-configurar-otros-treinta-anos-de-libertad-y-democracia/9989>.

*Ciudadanos*. (2017, 29 September).

*Ciudadanos*. (2017, 28 October). Hay que ganarles. Opinion. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/opinion/hay-que-ganarles/10088>.

recall how the Constitution gained large support in Catalonia.<sup>234</sup> The party urged people to vote on 21-D with the same will and passion as they did for the Constitution of 1978. They are told they will not regret it, as no one regrets voting for the Constitution.<sup>235</sup>

The Constitution did receive large support in Catalonia, also when compared to the rest of Spain.<sup>236</sup> The constitution needed to redefine Spanishness.<sup>237</sup> The question of Catalonia was a significant challenge, as the aspirations of the historical nationalities had grown but the armed forces' hostility towards regional autonomy had not disappeared.<sup>238</sup> Finally, this resulted in a compromise in which the whole of Spain was divided into 19 autonomous communities and cities. However, in contrast to the Constitution, the Statute of Autonomy regarding Catalonia and the Constitutional Court decisions on the communities were considered a disappointment and a betrayal.<sup>239</sup> Due to the changes, Catalonia was neither recognized as a nation nor were its financial demands met.<sup>240</sup> CUP interprets that the autonomy began with the Statute of Autonomy in 2006, but was reduced by the court decision in 2010.<sup>241</sup> EUiA in a similar vein accounts that the ruling of the Constitutional Court in 2010 cut the Statute endorsed by the majority of Catalonia, initiating the Statute's death.<sup>242</sup> Esquerra shares the interpretation of betrayal. The agreement was described as mockery, where no commitments and promises have been fulfilled. Instead, Catalonia has found itself in a political blockade of all decisions since 1978.<sup>243</sup>

To CUP the current Regime of 1978 is a system that should be ended,<sup>244</sup> ruled by the nationalist-Catholic and Francoist right of always, PP.<sup>245</sup> The current antidemocratic state is the result of the fascism of the transition, embodied by the Regime of 1978. The issues at hand were described as inherent to the current state, not a result of a democratic involution.<sup>246</sup> People in the Spanish state have long suffered from it, and this has provoked a popular movement, which is most visible in Catalonia.<sup>247</sup> The Regime of 1978 was equated

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234 Ciudadanos. (2017, 15 November). Ciudadanos. (2017, 6 December).

235 Ciudadanos. (2017, 6 December).

236 Dowling, A. (2018). p. 41

237 Ferreira, C. (2019).

238 Preston, P. (2017, 3 December).

239 Crameri, K. (2014) p. 62

240 Preston, P. (2017, 3 December).

241 CUP. (2017, 26 October).

242 EUiA. (2017, 29 September). Cataluña, más allá del 1 de Octubre. Retrieved from [https://www.semprealesquerra.cat/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/article\\_elsiglodeeuropa.pdf](https://www.semprealesquerra.cat/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/article_elsiglodeeuropa.pdf).

243 Esquerda. (2017, 24 September). Marta Rovira: "El debat que tenim entre mans és clar, entre avançar i construir un nou país o bé quedar-nos en l'immobilisme". La humanitat. Retrieved from <https://www.esquerra.cat/ca/marta-rovira-el-debat-que-tenim-entre-mans-es-clar-entre-avancar-i-construir-un-nou-pais-o-14560>.

244 CUP. (2017, 21 September).

245 CUP. (2017, 26 October).

246 CUP. (2017, 21 September).

247 CUP. (2017, 25 September).



or at least linked with the regime of 1936.<sup>248</sup> Like the previous section demonstrated, the shared aspects and actors between the two were put forth, which questions the existence and realisation of a transition to democracy.<sup>249</sup> There was no *tabula rasa*, CUP claimed, as Franco's judges and the justice system were sustained<sup>250</sup> and most of today's Catalans have not voted for the Constitution.<sup>251</sup>

The self-proclaimed transition to democracy was imposed by a head of state no one voted for, that is, the King.<sup>252</sup> He is described as the head of unity of Spain<sup>253</sup> and the one who "received as a heritage the duty of maintaining all tied and well tied up".<sup>254</sup> The King is considered as the way Franco stays in power.<sup>255</sup> To Ciudadanos he represents the unity of Spain and is, therefore, the independentists' target.<sup>256</sup> The contrast between the two descriptions is palpable: the current Spanish King Felipe VI is both the son of Franco's direct heir, chosen by Franco, and the successor of the hero of 23-F, who firmly defended democracy against the coup.

However, the transition-time President of Generalitat, Josep Tarradellas, is a character celebrated by both the constitutionalist Ciudadanos and the independentist Esquerra. When telling the party's history, Esquerra pointed out that the Generalitat is the only institution of the republican period that was recovered in transition, and its legitimacy was protected by the Presidents in exile, one of whom was Tarradellas.<sup>257</sup> Tarradellas is considered the key to a peaceful solution after Franco's death, and the negotiations he participated in resulted in the re-establishment of the Generalitat.<sup>258</sup>

On the 40th anniversary of President Tarradellas' return from exile, the regional leader of Ciudadanos, Inés Arrimadas, who aimed for the position of the President of Generalitat in the 2017 elections, paid tribute to him. She described how Tarradellas is the opposite of President Puigdemont: where Tarradellas defended institutional loyalty and fought to build bridges, Puigdemont is breaking them and "raising borders."<sup>259</sup> With the first democratically

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248 CUP. (2017, 25 September). CUP. (2017, 18 October).

249 CUP. (2017, 30 October).

250 CUP. (2017, 2 November).

251 CUP. (2017, 21 September).

252 CUP. (2017, 21 September).

253 CUP. (2017, 21 September).

254 CUP. (2017, 18 October).

255 CUP. (2017, 26 October).

256 Ciudadanos. (2017, 7 October). Entrevista a Albert Rivera: 'Hay que activar el 155 antes del lunes, se acaba el tiempo'. Cs in the media. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/noticia/entrevista-a-albert-rivera-hay-que-activar-el-155-antes-del-lunes-se-acaba-el-tiempo/10024?lg=es>.

257 Esquerra. (2017, 4 December).

258 Preston, P. (2017, 3 December).

259 Ciudadanos. (2017, 23 October). Inés Arrimadas: 'Unas elecciones permitirán devolver la autonomía y sus instituciones a todos los catalanes'. Press release. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/prensa/ines-arrimadas-unas-elecciones-permitiran-devolver-la-autonomia-y-sus-instituciones-a-todos-los-catalanes/10068>.

elected Spanish Prime Minister after Franco's death, Adolfo Suárez, Tarradellas is said to have recuperated the autonomy that the separatists have now liquidated.<sup>260</sup>

Ciudadanos repeatedly linked the Catalan independence movement with the violence, social confrontation and harm caused by Basque nationalism and ETA. It narrated that today the far-right and ETA lawyers support the independentists.<sup>261</sup> The linkages to ETA hints at criminalising the independentist movement. To illustrate the danger of the independentists' efforts, an opinion piece used the famous novel of Fernando Aramburu, *Patria*.<sup>262</sup> The novel covers how the Basque conflict divided families and villages, narrating the death of Txato, a victim of ETA. The opinion piece "Patria... again Patria" explains how this destructive collective delirium poisoned relationships, frightened the disagreeing into silence, and covered the country in shame. The development can still be stopped in Catalonia, the piece claims, and urges the readers to not leave Txato alone. Divisions in the Basque country, told by Fernando Aramburu in *Patria*, are used as a warning in Catalonia.

On the anniversary of Franco's death, a day during which radical right-wing groups' demonstrations keep the police forces busy with public security issues,<sup>263</sup> Ciudadanos did not mention the anniversary but recollected, for example, the police victims of ETA when arguing for the equalisation of security forces' salaries.<sup>264</sup> The indifference of the independence movement towards the 54 Catalan victims of ETA is deduced by Ciudadanos from Arnaldo Otegi's participation in the Diada, which was applauded, cheered and broadcast on Catalonia's public television channel TV3.<sup>265</sup> Arnaldo Otegi is a Basque politician who has been convicted of being an ETA member. After entering politics, he has been convicted and imprisoned for glorifying terrorism, participation in discussion on ETA's ceasefire, and trying to rebuild a forbidden party. The imprisonments have also received international attention. Ciudadanos related how "terrorist Otegi" was

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265 Ciudadanos. (2017, 15 September). De Páramo al director de TV3: 'Basta ya de lavar la imagen de Otegi con el dinero de todos los catalanes'. Press release. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/prensa/de-paramo-al-director-de-tv3-basta-ya-de-lavar-la-imagen-de-otegi-con-el-dinero-de-todos-los-catalanes/9944?lg=es>.

Ciudadanos. (2017, 18 September). Ciudadanos. (2017, 28 October).

received like a rock star, the independentists trying to turn him into a superhero.<sup>266</sup> TV3 was accused of using the Catalans' money to clean the image of its "new recruit", Otegi.<sup>267</sup>

CUP's standpoint is extremely different from Ciudadanos'. The party covers the concessions following the 23-F and the state's dirty war against ETA through the death squads, Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación (Antiterrorist Liberation Groups, GAL).<sup>268</sup> EUiA discusses the inadequacy of applying the solutions to Basque nationalism to the current situation in Catalonia, pointing to the lack of violence when compared to ETA.<sup>269</sup>

Ciudadanos claimed that the citizens do not accept blackmail anymore, like with ETA and the coup of 23-F:<sup>270</sup> the conflict today will be won similarly with democratic firmness and the leadership of the King.<sup>271</sup> Ciudadanos recalled the coup as the last challenge of this degree and supports similar solutions: arrests and restoration of constitutional order.<sup>272</sup> After the King spoke against the independentists on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October, Ciudadanos wrote how the King again marked the way for them to defend democracy and freedom.<sup>273</sup> Juan Carlos I's son, the current King, having to speak up to defend democracy was considered unbelievable, as these threats should be part of the past.<sup>274</sup> CUP however recalled that the laws on autonomy, dividing Spain into 19 autonomous communities, were a concession to those behind the coup of 23-F.<sup>275</sup>

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266 Ciudadanos. (2017, 18 September).

267 Ciudadanos. (2017, 15 September). Ciudadanos. (2017, 28 October).

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271 Ciudadanos. (2017, 7 October).

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272 Ciudadanos. (2017, 11b October). Rivera: 'Si no se aplica la Constitución en Cataluña la inmensa mayoría del pueblo español se enfadará'. Press release. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/prensa/rivera-si-no-se-aplica-la-constitucion-en-cataluna-la-inmensa-mayoria-del-pueblo-espanol-se-enfadara/10036>.

Ciudadanos. (2017, 18 September).

273 Ciudadanos. (2017, 4 October). Albert Rivera: 'El Gobierno tiene que salir del inmovilismo porque lo irresponsable empieza a ser no actuar'. Press release. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/prensa/albert-rivera-el-gobierno-tiene-que-salir-del-inmovilismo-porque-lo-irresponsable-empieza-a-ser-no-actuar/10007>.

274 Ciudadanos. (2017, 4b October). Rivera: 'Es el momento de actuar porque, o nos ponemos en marcha, o podemos perder este país'. Press release. Retrieved from <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/prensa/rivera-es-el-momento-de-actuar-porque-o-nos-ponemos-en-marcha-o-podemos-perder-este-pais/10010>.

275 CUP. (2017, 26b October).

## 6. Concluding discussion

The dynamics and framings of the Catalan crisis are inseparable from the Francoist past and how it is interpreted and felt. It works as a pretext: today's positions, justifications and opponents are borrowed from, supported by, and experienced like the interpretations and framings of the past. The past is used to highlight the magnitude and exceptionality of the current crisis but also, contrarily, to imply continuation, tradition, and expected patterns. Sometimes memory is used as a threat, accusation, or reminder of past harms, but at times it brings optimism regarding the future, a sense of collective, shared joy, responsibility, pride, gratitude, and hope. Memory guides at grasping the imagined 'us', 'them' and the nation altogether, whether Spain or Catalonia. It is a versatile and actively used resource.

All conflicting parties alike are using, influencing, reacting to, and countering memory in their arguments, though the manner and the contents differ, even within the conflicting groups. Framings of the past are echoed in the framings of the current situation. Moreover, all framings state a lack of democracy – and therefore the actions and positions of the opponents – to be something that belongs in the past, not the future or in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. León Solís predicted correctly that the “ghost of the Francoist past” would be “dusted down again as a de-legitimizing tool.”<sup>276</sup> However, both the constitutionalists and the independentists in Catalonia used the memory of Franco to delegitimize the opponents, who represent the past that ought to end. Moreover, political conflict is considered dividing and inherently harmful, as the myth of ungovernable Spaniards threatens with a violent escalation.

The independentists recall that President Companys declared the Catalan republic within the Second Republic, and was Franco's victim. Franco's military coup destroyed the Second Republic (Esquerra, CUP), the gained degree of independence (CUP, PDeCAT), and the social revolution of 1936 (CUP). Despite differences in the focal point, the independentists presented the current conflict as the heir of the Civil War. To impose Spanish unity, Franco restricted the use of Catalan, removed the Catalan autonomy, as well as imprisoned and executed masses of those fighting for democracy. The transition to democracy is framed as broken promises, betrayal, and not a transition at all, as the same powers continue to rule through the same families and the King. The different interpretations within the independentists do not seem to create clashes or issues, but they all fit within the campaign. The recalling collective also varies between texts: Esquerra and CUP's articles in English connect the struggles across time with the international efforts against fascism.

Contrary to Wagner's findings,<sup>277</sup> Ciudadanos' campaigning actively references even a past before transition: Ciudadanos remember the chaos of the Second Republic, specifically

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276 León Solís, F. (2003). p. 146

277 Wagner, P. (2018).

the anarchists' genocide against Catholics, and the rebellious declarations of President Macià and President Companys. These belong in the recollection of chaotic illegality and disorder of the time, which Franco sought to conquer. The party recalls that Franco took the Catalan institutions and autonomy, caused emotional and human fractures, and did not accept disagreeing voices. The transition brought legality, democracy, and most of all unity and coexistence, as instead of confrontation there were handshakes. The Constitution – strongly supported by Catalonia – democracy, and Spanish unity, with the leadership of the King, are framed to have defeated other challenges to the Spanish democracy, namely the coup of 23-F, divisive Basque nationalism, and terrorism. Furthermore, the party discussed the widest range of events and topics, even mentioning the 500-year-old relationship between Spain and Catalonia. Like the other groups, constitutionalists do not fully comply with the 'pact of forgetting', but do not articulate and narrate these references as explicitly and in such detail as the rest. This might be rooted in the narrative's more established status within Spain, or purposeful avoidance, preventing crossing the line when it comes to the possibly contesting private memories of the public.

The interpretations and framings differ significantly between the conflicting groups, as one's success and possible solution is another one's loss or failure, and somebody's hero is someone else's villain. The Second Republic is claimed as their past by at least one pro-referendum and two independentist leftist parties, which further complicates the dynamic. Franco's moral evaluation is shared by all. Yet, the reasons narrated are not explicitly the same, and for all groups the opponents represent Franco at least to some degree. The parties focus on separate aspects of the past, which do not always contradict each other: these spaces for similarities are partly a result of vagueness or silences, forgetting which is done more or less intentionally.

The relationship between the campaigning and the rhetorical and technical devices used to present the past is complex: the flags are not only waved, slogans repeated, and different activists referenced, but their employment and rejection are also debated and questioned. The correct combination of representations can add powerful volume to the message, whereas other utterances and associations are carefully avoided. Moreover, something that was Franco's, like the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, Elna, or the Modelo prison, is now seized and transformed into an important representation for the anti-Francoist, anti-fascist, and independentist. Memory's importance is visible from how the conflict spreads to the realm of representations and symbols.

The events of 2017 have joined the network of collective memories as one of the most recent layers, with something familiar from the past, this familiar varying amongst the recallers. The familiarity ensures that the past issues continue to be present, strengthening certain interpretations of them. Current experiences of harm, loss, and victimhood cannot

be dealt with separately from and without acknowledging the legacy through which they are interpreted. However, not all divisions and conflicts of the past are considered significant today, despite others resurfacing and being relived, further framing, fuelling, and complicating present-day clashes.

The aim is not to determine the issues, reasonings, and chains of actions that have caused or motivated the crisis itself. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that collective memories of the Civil War and Franco's regime play a prominent part in the conflict in Catalonia. All conflicting parties are using, influencing, reacting to, and countering memory in their arguments, citing, avoiding, and moulding different representations. The approach, regularity, thoroughness, and clarity differ, as do the elements selected. Results speak for plurality in recollections within the pro-referendum and independentists. The same cannot be concluded from the constitutionalists, as the sample included only one constitutionalist party. The main distinctions in the memory frames between the conflicting groups are situated in the relationship with the Second Republic, how much the current Spanish state has to do with its Francoist past, and how much – and what – the Catalan independentists and Basque nationalists have in common.

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## Federalism and Security: The Special Police in Ethiopia

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#### Abstract

Ensuring security is one of the defining characteristics and central claims of a state. In federal countries there is a possibility for two or more actors at different levels to have some mandate over security. In the case of federal Ethiopia the security sector remains complicated. The constituent units have established special police in addition to the regular police, and its role and status remains contested. What is the constitutional basis of the special police? Do regional states have a mandate to establish such a police? Is it a force for stability or instability? How should it be regulated?

These are the main questions that this article aims to investigate based on qualitative method, relevant comparative study, and empirical investigation into this rather complex sector. The findings show that the special police resemble more an army than a police force. It has also taken over the mandate of the army, which is a federal mandate. Lately, its size has increased significantly and retired army generals have begun to join it, hinting that the army is being drained.

The fact that the impact of the army is depleting owing to the ongoing civil war in the country and the constituent unit special police is slowly taking over mandate implies the center is losing control and the country is slowly falling apart along ethno-national fault lines. The article further explains the race behind the special police and proposes options on how to regulate it.

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#### Keywords

Special police Ethiopia, ethno federation, peace and security, regional police

## 1. Introduction

One of the defining characteristics and central claims of the state is to have monopoly over the use of force and ensure law and order in its territory (Weber, 1921). Whether federal or unitary, it is one of the essential roles of the state (Hobbes, 2010). Public security is a foundation for other higher goals such as democracy, development and good governance (Leuprecht, 2010). As part of the social contract, the state enjoys autonomy and monopoly to act in return for ensuring public safety and basic freedoms to the citizen. The issue of balancing the mandate of the government to act and ensure security on one hand, and the need to protect rights and freedoms as well as the rule of law on the other hand, is one of the thorny issues that continue to be debated. Nevertheless, both are critically needed: the balance is what is debated (Barak, 2006).

Compared to the army, which is responsible for external defense and ensuring the sovereignty of the country, the main role of the police is prevention and detection of crime, combatting and investigating crime, the maintenance of public order, enforcement of the law, and providing protection to citizens.<sup>1</sup>

In September 2020, the Ministry of Peace of Ethiopia issued a ‘Police Doctrine.’ The document states that ‘the Police as an institution should be demilitarized, depoliticized, democratized and provide decentralized services.’<sup>2</sup> The idea of civilian control over the police and the army has been there since the adoption of the 1995 constitution but the concept of police doctrine seems a new element. The concept of demilitarized police implies that the police is a civilian institution, not an army. Depoliticization of the police implies that the police as an institution should be free from the control of a political party. It is assumed to be an impartial body that serves society regardless of changes in political party through elections. Democratic policing is a much more complicated concept, and the document does not clearly define it. Bonner (2020:1046) defines the concept as follows:

‘democratic policing can be understood as when *elected political leaders* (italics by the author) are able to effectively use police to uphold the rule of law (implied to refer to both crime control and protest policing) and that the police, as public servants, respond to citizen complaints, are *accountable*, use a minimal level of *coercion*, and *respect human rights* and notions of justice and equality.’

Democratic policing is thus a rich concept that aims to reduce the violent potential within police by making it subject to a democratic system founded on the rule of law, systems of accountability, and more importantly, respect for human rights. It assumes therefore that

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1 The Ethiopian Federal Police Commission Establishment Proclamation No. 720/2011, Article 6(5)(c).

2 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Police Doctrine (2020) P.15.

the regime itself is primarily democratic – this is where the problem begins. If it is not, then the police becomes an instrument of repression and violates human rights. Democratic policing turns to *regime* policing with little accountability and respect for human rights while promoting partisan interests.

The ideal, however, is that the police has the duty to respect the rights of citizens and as a branch of the executive is bound by the rule of law. The police as an institution is assumed to be a civil institution of the government, separate from the army, but as several studies indicate, the influence of politics on the police is particularly visible in Ethiopia (Gebeyehu, 2016). The laws regulating the police, the process of appointment of the heads of the police, and the fact that its mission is set by a hegemonic ruling party makes the police prone to political manipulations. Indeed Ethiopia has never had a neutral/de-politicised police force. Under the current context, there is a problem of security pluralism in which policing/security authority is vested in several institutions such as regional (regular) police, regional special police, regional militia, irregular armed groups with a political agenda partly supported by regional or federal authorities (like the Fanno), and federal police. As will be shown later, the various entities may on occasion work at odds with each other leading to vertical and horizontal conflicts. Whatever the motives are, the new ruling elite that assumed power in 2018 has literally deinstitutionalized the security sector and is slowly losing monopoly over the use of force.

As a result of the above security context, tensions emerge between those who hold power and influence the police and the rule of law that requires that power itself is regulated by law and limits the whims of the rulers. The rule of law and human rights aim at limiting the violent potential within the executive in general and the police in particular. Political institutions such as parliament use the rule of law and human rights as a framework to exercise oversight over the police. Both are key tools for ensuring accountability to the police. Yet as this study later demonstrates, there are dilemmas and contradictions between promises and reality. The police (in particular the special police) is becoming militarized – not demilitarized as claimed in the policy document – so much so that one finds difficulty in distinguishing it from the army. Ethiopia has a distinct institution called special police (*Liyu Police* in Amharic) whose constitutional mandate and role remains contested. The fact that the impact of the army is depleting owing to the ongoing civil war in the country and constituent unit special police is slowly taking over mandate implies the center is losing control and the country is slowly falling apart along the ethno national fault lines. The article demonstrates this state of fact and calls for a political dialogue to address the political issues and regulate the special police.

There are many published materials on the federal system in Ethiopia (Markakis et al, 2021; Fiseha, 2012; Kefale, 2009; Habtu, 2005; Turton, 2006) but it is hardly possible to

find any published source on the special police despite its increasing role. The study fills this gap and sheds some light into this institution.

Whether it is possible to ensure democracy, stability, peace and social cohesion in countries with deep societal divisions and the appropriate institutional arrangements is one of the central political issues of our time (Stepan *et al*, 2011). This is particularly so in many diverse countries that host deeply divided cleavages. Politically mobilized cleavages continue to threaten the centralized nation state (Kymlicka, 2007: 62). Following the end of the Cold War, such cleavages caused what Arend Lijphart dubs a ‘wave of ethnic conflicts,’ (Lijphart, 2002:37) instead of the promised ‘third wave of democracy’ (Huntington, 1991). Mobilized ethno-national minorities are ‘regionally concentrated ethnic groups who once enjoyed or aim to enjoy political autonomy and have become part of states in which they constitute an ethnic minority through conquest, annexation, colonization or incorporation during the coercive process of nation building’ (Gurr, 1993, p.19). They mobilize politically around assertions of national identity and self-determination. The goal of such mobilization is to recover the extensive self-government they claim to have enjoyed historically or they aspire to have now. The degree of self-government they seek ranges from autonomy, to national self-government, to independent statehood, which may include secession. Countries that have politically mobilized ethno-national groups cannot assume to have stable territory. As is the case in Ethiopia, the demands of such groups are framed and entrenched in relation to a particular territory, and the very existence of the unity and territorial integrity of the state is put to test (Anderson and Choudhry, 2019:374).

According to Horowitz (2002), deeply divided society refers to cases in which identity-based politics have a high degree of salience exceeding that accorded to alternative forms of political mobilization such as ideology, class, and gender, and the relationship between groups is affected by deep levels of mistrust and antagonism, making it less cooperative. As argued by Sujit Choudhry (2008:5) ‘a divided society is not merely a society which is ethnically, linguistically, religiously or culturally diverse... it is hard to imagine a state today that is not diverse.’ What makes a society divided is when the differences are politically salient and an identity-based distinct group uses it as a basis for political mobilization. As such, identity becomes the prime source of political mobilization around which political claims for recognition, resource control, accommodation, and self-government are framed, political parties formed, elections contested and governments composed (Anderson and Choudhry, 2019:374).

Following the end of the Cold War, realizing that the centralized nation state has failed to deliver peace, many African countries have adopted federalism and devolution as a means to manage conflicts. For some it became a means to ‘domesticate the Leviathan’ (Steytler, 2016: 272) by transferring power from the all-powerful center to subunits, diffusing power

into many centers. In others, federalism and devolution go beyond diffusing power and aim to manage territorially based and politically mobilized cleavages. Four main African countries (Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Africa and Kenya) have used federalism and devolution to achieve either or both of the above objectives. Within the African continent, Ethiopia remains very distinct as it hosts countless ‘national liberation fronts’, a record in the region, that despite five decades of central onslaught have not only challenged the centralised system in Ethiopia but were able to defeat the military junta (the Derg 1974–1991) in 1991. Ethiopia lost Eritrea and the threat of secession is still a problem as it harbours many national liberation movements such as the Oromo, the Ogaden/Somali, and the Tigray among others. Some ten ethno national groups that used to administer themselves at local government level in the South have, following the winds of change in 2018, demanded a constituent unit status, and two of them – the Sidama and South West – have formally become Ethiopia’s tenth and eleventh states. The war between the federal government and Tigray, although having multiple causes, is very much related to Tigray’s age-old demand for genuine self-government<sup>3</sup> and fair representation in federal institutions. Ethno-national groups are thus demanding more, not less, even after two and half decades of federal practise. Ethno-national forces remained partly dominant until 2018, but with the emergence of a new ruling elite in 2018 and a new narrative that considers the post 1991 federal Ethiopia as a disruption to the centralized nation building, the cleavages have once

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3 The claim on the part of the federal government is that TPLF has ‘attacked the Ethiopian army base (the Northern Command) that was based in Tigray’ on 4 November, 2020 and took what it calls ‘law enforcement operation’ to bring culprits to justice. At its core however is ideological crisis and lack of competent leadership within the ruling party. Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) was dissolved prematurely and rebranded as Prosperity Party (PP) without creating enough consultation and consensus. The Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) saw that as a step towards centralization that will lead to dissolving the federal system and withdrew from it as the process dissolved the members of the coalition. The federal government continued to target the TPLF, accusing it of human rights violations, while the TPLF responded accusing PP as a centrist regime. On 3 November 2020, a mutually destructive war began between the federal government and Tigray regional state. This was a consequence of years of misunderstandings between the two governments. Tigray claimed genuine self-government while the federal government, imposing a puppet government in the region, accused the TPLF of attacking the Northern military division. A national election that was planned for August 2020 was postponed by the federal government using rubber stamp institutions and COVID-19 as pretext while Tigray accused the federal government of ‘rule without mandate,’ contesting the constitutionality of such an extension of term. What is tragic is foreign forces are involved in the war and it is slowly turning into a major crisis with implications to the Horn. Marks, Simon; Walsh, Declan (28 December 2020) ‘Refugees Come Under Fire as Old Foes Fight in Concert in Ethiopia’ *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/28/world/africa/Ethiopia-Eritrea-Tigray.html>; 28 December, 2020. The government’s narrative is also contested by other credible sources. See the African Union press release at <https://inquiry.achpr.org/elementor-536/> as accessed on 23 June 2021; The New York Times also wrote, ‘Mr. Coons, a Democrat warned Abiy about dangers of war in Tigray way before 4 November 2020. Mr. Abiy was undeterred. “He was confident it would be over in six weeks,” Mr. Coons said. Days later, on the evening of the American presidential election, fighting erupted in Tigray.’ Declan Walsh, *From Nobel Hero to Driver of War, Ethiopia’s Leader Faces Voters* *The New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/21/world/africa/Ethiopia-election-Abiy-Ahmed.html>



again began to threaten the center.<sup>4</sup> The new leadership has declared several command posts as a means to centralize power and control the periphery, but the war and tension between the center and the periphery has reached a new stage.

Federalism as defined by Daniel Elazar (1987: 12), combining shared rule and self-rule in which political, financial and judicial powers are divided between the federal government and constituent units, and each level enjoying constitutionally enshrined autonomy, was often articulated as alternative to end conflicts and as a peace making instrument in the early 1990s. Through its combination of constitutionally entrenched division of power as well as the principles of shared rule and self-rule, it allows mobilized groups to enjoy political autonomy at subunit level while ensuring representation at federal level. Through the institutions of shared rule and representation in federal institutions, ethno-nationalist groups are given the opportunity to influence decision-making at the center. The logic of this form of federalism is that ethno-nationalist groups can only respect the institutions of governance and thus contribute to stable federation when they are granted a satisfactory combination of *influence* at the center and *meaningful autonomy* at the sub state level with regard to their own affairs (Lijphart, 1979:500).

A brief exploration of the theories of federalism demonstrates that it has two major origins: one in the United States (1787) and the other from continental Europe. Karmis and Norman (2005:25) wrote ‘theories of federation were formulated in response to the rise of centralized modern states and to the theory of sovereignty that came to support them.’ Older and loose empires in Europe were weakening, leading to centralized and absolute monarchs. Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes provided the theory of centralized sovereignty in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The theories of absolute state sovereignty were however challenged by other experts that theorized on a shared federative sovereignty based on ongoing political experiments like the Swiss and Dutch confederations. German jurist Johannes Althusius (*Politica* 1603, politics as the art of associating) and German philosopher Samuel Pufendorf (*The Law of Nature and Nations* 1672) were among the pioneers of this alternative federalist approach. Both authors articulated the foundations for what later came to be known as *confederations*. This is the first and original conception of federalism (in today’s vocabulary – confederation) as evolved in Europe.

It should be born in mind that the concepts confederation and federation were interchangeably used and articulated as an alternative to centralized nation states until the establishment of the US federation in 1787, where the federal system emerged as distinct form of political organization separate from a confederation. The Articles of Confederation (1781) were found to be inadequate by the founding fathers, and following a series of debates

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4 Daniel Kibret, an advisor to Abiy Ahmed said ‘we will continue to implement Menliks nation building project that was disrupted by the EPRDF in 1991.’ See at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZzcxrHngV4&t=1759s>

in Philadelphia they dropped it and designed the first modern federation. The authors of the *Federalist Papers* (Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison – known by their pen name *Publius*) highlighted how the new entity they designed is different from its predecessor – the Articles of Confederation. This came to be known as the American model that influenced several other federal systems so much so that K. C. Wheare (1963), the first known author on Comparative federalism, considers the American system as a model against which others are compared and analyzed. Federalism (in its original sense as in the EU or other loose global cooperation schemes) is also adopted to accommodate politically mobilized groups.

There are thus two major intellectual origins to the idea of federalism. Karmis and Norman (2005:7) rightly wrote ‘From the late 1780s on, the federal tradition evolved into two very different – and often opposed – schools or traditions of political thought: one dominated by the evolving American model; and the other continuing the older, and increasingly neglected, confederalist (European) tradition.’ It is thus vital to note that there are differences in the intellectual origins of federalism. Americans focus on the federal *union* created following the collapse of the confederation, while Europeans focus on *the parties* that establish the federation as articulated by John Althusius, which is communitarian and confederal with the EU being one of its modern manifestations (Requejo, 2012:57). This distinction remains critical in addressing one of the most complex issues of our time: how to manage diversity in deeply divided societies with politically mobilized cleavages. The American tradition advocates for integration – a more centralized federal design while the European approach focuses on accommodation where more power is devolved to constituent units designed to empower politically mobilized cleavages with a more consociational power sharing scheme at the center. This distinction also remains relevant in regulating the security sector, a major focus of this article. While integration would insist on having one national security system, the confederal approach treats security as in other power that has to devolve to constituent units.

In federal systems, there is a possibility for two or more actors at different levels to have either separate or shared mandates over security (Watts, 2008; Wheare, 1963). Thus in addition to the thorny issue of balancing the coercive mandate of the state in ensuring security against right of citizens that emerges in any state, federalism brings further dimensions to it. How does one allocate competences on security among the different levels of governments and at the same time ensure smooth coordination among different actors while avoiding anarchy and fragmentation? What is the constitutional base of the special police? Do regional states have a mandate to establish such a police and is it contributing to stability or instability? How should it be regulated? These are the main questions that this article aims to investigate.

This article contains five sections. Section one has presented the introduction and the research questions. Section two explains the genesis of the special police, showing its origin and how it evolved across time. Section three analyses the constitutional basis of the special police. There has been a continuous debate on whether the special police has any legal basis, and this section addresses that core issue. This section also explains the race behind the special police and the debate between the political elite in Ethiopia. Although the special police has existed since 2007, its size and level of engagement has increased significantly following the crisis and rupture within the ruling party since 2015. One could consider this moment as a watershed in terms of understanding the special police. Section four discusses comparative insight from some federal systems as to how security is divided between federal and sub unit governments. The last section provides the conclusion and recommendations.

The study is based on i) in-depth interviews with key informants, including members of the special police, former and retired army generals who served as either heads or trainers of the regional special police, and members of the Federal Police who work closely with the regional special police; ii) a focus group discussion (FGD) with academics, a regional state police commission, and militia; iii) review of federal and regional legal sources and policy documents; iv) and review of secondary sources. The report has primarily looked at the special police in Oromia and Amhara, which have the most sizeable special police forces in Ethiopia, although trends are similar in other regions of Ethiopia. It has also analyzed information from the Somali region, where the special police emerged, and Tigray, despite the current difficulties in accessing information from the region. With a view to draw relevant experiences from other federal systems, a review of comparative and relevant literature of other federal countries is used as a framework. The primary and secondary sources have been systematically analyzed and interpreted in the different sections of the article.

## **2. The rise of the Special Police**

Established first in Ethiopia's Somali region in 2007 to conduct counter-insurgency operations and riot control, special police quickly spread to all other regions of Ethiopia.<sup>5</sup> Later it was a main actor in interregional state conflicts. Currently many of the regional states argue that they continue to lose faith in federal institutions, including the army as it continues to serve partisan and factional interests, and thus they are using the special police as a means to defend themselves from what they call 'undue interference from

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5 Interview with member of the federal police 5 June 2021, Addis Ababa.

federal government or other regional states.<sup>6</sup> A retired army general and former head of special police said ‘in a divided society like Ethiopia, it is hardly possible to have impartial federal institutions such as the army. They have fallen into the hands of factional leaders that continue to serve or defend the interest of a section of society. As a result, regional states resort to their special police to defend their interests.’<sup>7</sup>

## 2.1 Its origin

Coming back to its origin, the special police was established in the Somali regional state in response to the insurgent Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), a group fighting for the self-determination of the Somali region (Hajmann, 2020). The ONLF was accused of summary execution of dozens of Chinese and Ethiopian civilians in the context of its April 2007 attack on the oil installation in the region. It was also accused of indiscriminate mining of roads used by government convoys.<sup>8</sup> Given that the ONLF was operating in the region for some time and causing rising security concern both for the country and the Somali region, the federal government and the then president of the regional state Abdi Mohamed Omar “Iley”,<sup>9</sup> who is the regional state’s longest serving president from 2010–2018 (now in jail), established the Somali region special force (Hajmann, 2020) as a means to counter the ONLF. The regional state special police was initially estimated to be 10,000 but later estimates show a number as high as 45,000.<sup>10</sup> It was deliberately drawn from the Ogaden clan, the same clan the ONLF claims to represent, although at later stages it absorbed recruits from other Somali region clans. With the federal army unable to understand local dynamics in the region owing to language and geographic barriers, Iley and the federal government found a way to deal with the ONLF insurgency using a force from its own clan, well versed in the local dynamics. Some of the members of the special police were indeed former members of the ONLF.

The special police was also reportedly engaged in offensive operations, at times crossing the border and entering into Somalia to attack al-Shabaab Islamic militants – a role that shows a takeover of the federal government’s mandate.<sup>11</sup>

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6 Interview with former head of a regional state special police and retired army general, 26 May 2021.

7 Interview with former head of a regional state special police and retired army general, 26 May 2021.

8 See Ethnic Somali rebels kill 74 at Chinese oilfield in Ethiopia Ethnic Somali rebels kill 74 at Chinese oilfield in Ethiopia | World news | The Guardian as accessed on 05 May 2021.

9 Abdi Iley was security head of the Somali region and he was facing the ONLF way before he, along with the federal government, agreed to establish the special police. Query response Ethiopia: The special police (Liyu Police) in the Somali Regional State *LandInfo* 3 June 2016.

10 Query response Ethiopia: The special police (Liyu Police) in the Somali Regional State *LandInfo* 3 June 2016; Brook Abdu, Regional Special Forces: threats or safeties? <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/article/regional-special-forces-threats-or-safeties> *REPORTER* as accessed on 3 May 2021.

11 Query response Ethiopia: The special police (Liyu Police) in the Somali Regional State *LandInfo* 3 June 2016.

It should be noted that dealing with terrorism (al-Shabaab and ONLF were designated as such) is a mandate of the Federal Police.<sup>12</sup> While the special police may have played a role in ensuring relative peace and stability in the Somali region, the same force was accused of committing extra-judicial killings, torture and gross human rights violations in the region.<sup>13</sup> Tobias Hagmann (2020) concludes that the Iley era was a ‘decade of fear and terror in Ethiopia’s Somali region.’ Human Rights Watch has also issued several reports accusing the Special Police and the regional state president of ‘extrajudicial killings, torture and violence against people in the Somali region.’<sup>14</sup> At the height of the Oromia-Somali region conflict in 2017, the Oromia region accused Iley and the special police of triggering the conflict between the two regional states and displacement of hundreds of thousands from the border areas of the two regional states.<sup>15</sup> The special police from both regional states was accused of these massive atrocities.

The border between Oromia and the Somali region has never been clearly drawn, and there are claims and counter claims between the two regional states. In 2004, the House of Federation (HoF) organized a referendum of over 420 *Kebeles* (*sub districts*) and the process was supposed to bring an end to such claims. The result of the referendum was however never implemented, and there has been a lot of manipulation from both sides. Traditional conflicts were often managed through elders, but with the engagement of the regional state political elite from both sides and given that the disputed areas coincided with the administrative boundaries between regional governments the conflicts transformed from localized disputes to what appears to be a war between two regional states (Kefale, 2004).<sup>16</sup> According to Yesuf (2019:9) the conflicts between the two regional states ‘were partly a culmination of the power struggle between the special forces, the political elite and militias of the two regions.’ Each side mobilizes its population and special police against the other. The special police carry modern weapons and the impact is thus massive. The federal institutions such as the HoF, defense force, and federal police intervene often late or take sides and aggravate the crisis. When Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed assumed his power, it was no surprise when he deposed Iley from his power and sent him to jail, replacing the regional state presidency with Mustafe Umer (a victim who lost his brother to the special police led by Iley and who was in exile in Kenya) who still remains in office.

In the last three years, interregional state conflicts have become a recurring problem.

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- 12 The Ethiopian Federal Police Commission Establishment Proclamation No. 720/2011, Art 6(5) c.  
13 See detailed report of *Human Rights Watch* Ethiopia: Special Police Execute 10, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/05/28/ethiopia-special-police-execute-10>, 28 May 2012.  
14 See Ethiopia: Probe Years of Abuse in Somali Region, Redress and Accountability Needed for Crimes *Human Rights Watch* 20 August, 2018.  
15 See Harry Verhoeven ‘An eastern problem for Ethiopia’s new leader’ at <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/eastern-problem-ethiopia-leader-180408103243499.html> as accessed on 10 April, 2018.  
16 Asnake Kefale, ‘Federalism: Some Trends of Ethnic Conflicts and their Management in Ethiopia’, in A.G. Nhema (ed.) *The Quest for Peace in Africa*, (2004).

The Amhara- Benishangul Gumuz, Amhara-Oromia,<sup>17</sup> Amhara-Tigray,<sup>18</sup> and Afar-Somali conflicts have caused death and displacement of millions of people.<sup>19</sup> Most of these conflicts relate to claims and counter claims related to land and rights of minorities in regional states. In all these conflicts the regional state special police is the main actor, as the federal government often fails to provide a political solution before violence erupts.

Despite the establishment of the special police in 2007, its dramatic increase in size and active engagement in interregional conflicts is linked with the crisis in the ruling party that took special shape in 2015. There is an emerging consensus among experts that shows the strong link between the massive proliferation of the regional state police both in terms of size, weapons and frequency, and the split, rupture and mistrust within the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)<sup>20</sup> that also coincides with the protests that began in 2015.<sup>21</sup> Rene Lefort (2021) wrote 'the regional states have pursued militarization ... when rifts inside the EPRDF moved the country into the unknown.'<sup>22</sup> The rupture within EPRDF, internal power struggle, and the widespread protests can be taken as watershed in this regard. The rupture and mistrust within EPRDF led to claims and counter claims among regional states and tension between the federal government (or whatever interest it promotes) and regional states.

It is also vital to see its links with the ideological fragmentation of EPRDF. EPRDF was a coalition of four ethno-national based parties – i.e. an ethnic coalition in form, however, at the same time it showed strong ideological and class features manifested in the form of revolutionary democracy, democratic centralism and state led development (Aalen, 2000; Clapham, 2017). It was an ethnic coalition but had class (peasant-based) and ideology content. Gradually the class and ideological component withered away with a lack of competent leadership and militant ethno-nationalism took center stage. As one political observer stated, 'the current ruling party (PP) is politically and ideologically orphaned

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17 Zecharias Zelalem Worsening violence in western Ethiopia forcing civilians to flee <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/20/worsening-violence-western-ethiopia-forcing-civilians-to-flee> 20 March 2021.

18 Kjetil Tronvoll, Ethiopia: Tigray, Sudan, Amhara... The multiple crises of Abiy Ahmed, *the Africa report* <https://www.theafricareport.com/77505/ethiopia-tigray-sudan-amhara-the-multiple-crisis-of-abiya-ahmed/> 5 April 2021.

19 Tom Gardner, All Is Not Quiet on Ethiopia's Western Front, *Foreign Policy* <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/06/ethiopia-benishangul-gumuz-violence-gerd-western-front/> 6 January 2021.

20 EPRDF was a coalition of four ethno national based parties. A perception of marginalization, corruption, and maladministration in the political system led to widespread protests in 2015–2018 that led to resignation of former Prime Minister Haile Mariam Desalegn and the coming to power of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The new leader dissolved the EPRDF and established prosperity party (PP) after one of its coalitions the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) declined to join PP.

21 Interview with a member of the federal police who had links with regional state police, Addis Ababa 5 June 2021. See also Harry Verhoeven, *supra*.

22 Rene Lefort, 'Ethiopia's war in Tigray is 'but the tip of the iceberg when it comes to conflicts ravaging the country' the Africa report <https://www.theafricareport.com/84350/ethiopia-war-in-tigray-is-but-the-tip-of-the-iceberg-when-it-comes-to-conflicts-ravaging-the-country/> 30 April 2021.

EPRDF minus the TPLF.<sup>23</sup> Thus frequent and recurring tensions emerge between Oromia and Somali, Afar and Somali, Oromia and Amahara, Amhara and Tigray, Amhara and Benishangul. The late Brigadier General Asaminew Tsige's inflammatory statement is epic in this regard, but similar speeches exist everywhere. He said, 'The Amahara people are facing an existential threat much worse than what happened to them under Ahmed Gragn and the Oromo expansion some 500 years ago.'<sup>24</sup> The consequence and the message is clear: despite some differences across regional states, the special police force (in the case of Tigray, Tigray Defense Force, TDF) is considered as a safeguard of the regional state's dominant elite's interests.<sup>25</sup>

As the above discussion shows, the basic function of the special police of the Somali region was not limited to maintaining peace and order in the region as defined in the federal and regional state constitutions. As will be shown in the next section, special police of Amhara and the South (Habtetsion, 2017:189) have also been engaged in tasks which fall within the exclusive mandate of the federal government and the national defense army. Protecting and defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country is the mandate of the defense forces, not regional state special police forces. Addressing interregional state conflicts is also a mandate of federal institutions such as HoF, although disputing regional states are also expected to resolve the conflict.

## 2.2 Objective and mandate controversy

Whether it is federal or regional state police, police as an institution according to Roche (2011:4) is 'tasked with maintaining internal public security and order. In democracies, police forces are often tasked with protecting human rights... Police forces are distinct from armed forces in that they are exclusively assigned with the mission of maintaining *internal* public law and order.'

It is critical to note that while the federal police force and national defense have country-wide jurisdiction (although they have to find legal ways to intervene in the affairs of regional states as the grounds of intervention are stipulated under Arts 93–94 of the federal constitution), regional state police and special police have limited jurisdiction. They can only operate *within the state* that has established them.<sup>26</sup> While this sounds simple and clear in the federal constitution, in reality one finds an anomaly that is causing havoc. At

23 Interview Addis Ababa 20 May 2021.

24 His speech at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhKT2EbcaKc> also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyQT9clD5Qs>

25 Bereket Tsegay, regional police threat to peace and security in Ethiopia <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2021/02/regional-special-forces-pose-threat-to-peace-and-security-ethiopia/> as accessed on 3 May 2021.

26 See Article 52 of the federal constitution.

the height of the confrontation between the federal government and Tigray regional state (2020–2021), Prime Minister Abiy while reporting to parliament in 2021 when asked what the Amhara region special police is doing in Tigray, responded ‘I can deploy the Amhara region special police to Tigray, the Somali region or any other place for that matter.’<sup>27</sup> The engagement of regional state special police outside of the regional state that has established it remains contested and unconstitutional. The current trend creates a new precedent on the role of the special police further complicating its role. It has been deployed with the order of the federal government outside of the particular regional state that established it.

Ensuring the sovereignty of the country is a prime function of the federal government, and in particular of the defense forces (Article 87-3 of the Ethiopian constitution). The army may have difficulties understanding local conflict dynamics and thus may need to work closely with the regional state and their security apparatus, but to delegate such a crucial mandate to a special police seen in hindsight is an abdication of major constitutional responsibility and may have already created *a wrong precedent* on the role of the special police. The mandate of any regional state including the controversial special police is *limited within the territory* of the regional state. If the territory shares an international border, as is the case in the Somali region, the very region that established the special police, as well as the Amhara region that now faces incursions from the Sudan, it then becomes a mandate of the federal government and has to take full responsibility to deal with it both politically (through diplomacy, peace deals, treaties) or if that fails defend the country from aggression. Using regional state special police for cross-border conflicts is not only unconstitutional but complicates the role of the special police and induces it to think as if it is a regional state defense force with a much bigger ambition that overlaps or even substitutes for the role of federal defense forces. This confusion in the mandate and role of the special police is a major source of the chaos the country is currently in. The regional state special police is now everywhere in the regions and has assumed a much more complicated role. It has now taken over the role of the defense force.

Tigray regional state, which shares a long border with Eritrea, brings a much more complicated reality. The war between the federal government and Tigray is a major anomaly. When the war broke out in early November 2020, the Eritrean government joined the Ethiopian defense force and entered Tigray, crossing an international boundary and causing the worst form of human rights abuses, as widely reported by credible human rights institutions and the international media.<sup>28</sup> The Ethiopian government invited a

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27 His speech is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-2cN-3KK0A> , as accessed on 23 September 2022.

28 Human Rights Watch Ethiopia: Eritrean Forces Massacre Tigray Civilians, UN Should Urgently Investigate Atrocities by all Parties <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/05/ethiopia-eritrean-forces-massacre-tigray-civilians> 5 March 2021; Ethiopia’s Tigray conflict: World powers condemn ‘human rights abuses’ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-56613940#:~:text=The%20G7%20group%20of%20leading,Ethiopia’s%20conflict%20hit%20Tigray%20region.&text=Both%20countries’%20troops%20have%20been,and%20the%20abuse%20of%20refugees.> 2 April, 2021.



foreign army to its own internal problem instead of defending the territorial integrity of the country.<sup>29</sup> As if this is not enough source of trouble, the federal government also brought Amhara regional state special police to Tigray<sup>30</sup> and has been accused of ‘ethnic cleansing.’<sup>31</sup> The Ethiopian government initially denied the involvement of the Eritrean army, but in the end both the Ethiopian and Eritrean government admitted their massive involvement when international human rights institutions and the media came up with mounting evidence.<sup>32</sup> As far as its mandate is concerned, the federal army has the right to intervene in the regional state, although ideally this is done through a political settlement, not force. Yet, in the opinion of Getachew Reda, a member of the senior leadership of the TPLF ‘the involvement of the Eritrean forces in Tigray is not only a strange anomaly but constitutes treason of the highest level in any country that has a constitutional order.’<sup>33</sup> The involvement of the Amhara region special police remains contrary to the mandate clearly stipulated in the constitution that states that their role is limited within the territory of the (Amhara) regional state.

Whatever the mandate controversy and the original plan for establishing the special police was, it has now become clear that it is engaged in interregional state conflict and securing international borders with or without the federal government’s role. This development blurs the distinction between the armed forces and police. To this, one should add that members of the defense force that for one reason or another have left the institution continue to join the regional state special police, at times becoming its leaders.<sup>34</sup> The late Brigadier General Asaminew Tsige was formerly an army general of the defense force who was accused of coup and sent to jail in 2009. After Prime Minister Abiy came to power he was released and the Amhara region appointed him as head of the police. Brigadier

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29 Michael Fitzpatrick Ethiopia: Eritrea to Withdraw Troops From Ethiopia’s Ravaged Tigray Region Radio France Internationale <https://allafrica.com/stories/202103260778.html> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rsGo8FSsKA> .

30 There are claims and counter claims over the territories in the western and southern part of Tigray between Amhara and Tigray regional states. See Russel (1833).

31 Declan Walsh, Ethiopia’s War Leads to Ethnic Cleansing in Tigray Region, U.S. Report Says <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/26/world/middleeast/ethiopia-tigray-ethnic-cleansing.html> 23 May 2021; Servet Gunergok, Ethnic cleansing being Committed in Tigray: Report <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/ethnic-cleansing-being-committed-in-tigray-report/2158784> 23 May 2021.

32 See Amnesty International Report, Ethiopia: The Massacre in Axum <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/3730/2021/en/> 26 February 2021; Ethiopia: Persistent, credible reports of grave violations in Tigray underscore urgent need for human rights access – Bachelet <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26838&LangID=E>; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/17/eritrea-confirms-its-troops-are-fighting-ethiopia-tigray> 17 April 2021.

33 Getachew Reda’s interview (TPLF executive member) on Tigray Media House (TMH) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PufIoemmgU0&t=234s> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PufIoemmgU0> 27 May 2021

34 See Ethiopia A general defects <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2006/08/17/a-general-defects>; Nizar Maneh, ‘Abiy Ahmed’s Reforms have Unleashed Forces he can no longer control’ *Foreign Policy* 4 July, 2019.

General Kemal Gelchu was a member of the defense force who abandoned the army and escaped to Eritrea in 2006 and joined the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). When the Ethiopian government declared amnesty to rebel forces in exile, he returned to Ethiopia and was appointed as head of Oromia security office until his dismissal in 2019. Brigadier General Tefera Mamo who was once in jail accused of an attempted coup also joined the Amhara security apparatus, becoming its head upon his release from jail on amnesty. Similar developments exist in Tigray. In a recent interview, Ethiopia's former chief of the army Lieutenant General Tsadkan Gebretensai stated 'in response to the all-out war against Tigray that began early November 2020, senior Tigrayan generals and colonels have taken over the task of training new recruits to TDF.'<sup>35</sup>

According to some sources Oromia and Amhara regions have each close to 100,000 special police.<sup>36</sup> In a report to army generals in Mekelle in December 2020, Prime Minister Abiy stated there is an estimated special force of 80,000 in Tigray, while the Crisis Group estimates that it numbers in the hundreds of thousands.<sup>37</sup> Other regional states have smaller forces than the three regional states.<sup>38</sup> Other sources estimate the size of the special police to be higher than the above figures, and with the effect of the ongoing war between the federal government and Tigray regional state the size of the defense force may have reduced from three years ago, with the size of the special force massively increasing in nearly all regional states.<sup>39</sup>

At the time of writing a large part of Ethiopia's territory on the west is under the control of Sudan.<sup>40</sup> In the normal course of things, ensuring the territorial integrity of the country against foreign aggression is an exclusive mandate of the federal government. The federal government has done little in this respect except the official denouncement of such incursion and the call for peaceful resolution of the matter. Left alone, the Amhara regional state has deployed its own special police in defense of its territory. One can imagine the size and nature of weapons used by the Amhara region special police as it is confronting the Sudanese defense force. As a result, some estimate the size of the Amhara region's special force can only be in the hundreds of thousands.

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35 Dimsti Weyane Interview with Lieutenant General Tsadkan Gebretensai <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McgqxJfVecY> 29 May 2021.

36 Interview with member of the federal police 26 May 2021 Addis Ababa.

37 See his Speech at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goJobQ1p3-c>. International Crisis Group quoted in Reuters <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-conflict-military-factbox-idUSKBN27T14J> as accessed on 3 September 2021

38 Rene Lefort, *Ethiopia's vicious deadlock* <https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2021/04/27/ethiopias-vicious-deadlock/> 27 April, 2021.

39 Interview with a member of the federal police who also works with regional state police 5 June 2021. Brook Abdu, Regional Special Forces: threats or safeties? <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/article/regional-special-forces-threats-or-safeties> REPORTER as accessed on 3 May, 2021.

40 See Alex de Waal, Viewpoint: Why Ethiopia and Sudan have fallen out over al-Fashaga <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55476831>

The war that broke out between the federal government and Tigray regional state has been going on for nine months nonstop. Several media sources have reported the involvement of Eritrean forces and regional state special forces from Amhara, Afar, and other regional states on the side of the Ethiopian defense force. One can thus imagine the size of the army on the side of the federal government. The Tigray regional state special police, now renamed Tigray Defense Force (TDF), is a force that has resisted all the above forces for this long and cannot be small by any means.<sup>41</sup> Lieutenant General Tadesse Werede stated ‘Tigray had 9,000 regional state special police when the war broke out in November 2020.’<sup>42</sup> Yet as the war continued for months, its size must have increased significantly. All the same, the weapons carried by all sides of the conflict are not any different from those carried by the Ethiopian defense force.

The above developments make the distinction between defense force and special police blurred and complicated. More importantly, according to a key informant from Oromia,<sup>43</sup> the defense and federal security apparatus is slowly losing its capable people as they continue to join the regional state special police. This brings two important consequences: not only do regional state special police increasingly resemble Ethiopia’s national defense force, but this also leads to the gradual weakening and perhaps even *liquidation* of the defense force.

### 3. The constitutional and legal challenge to the Special Police

Ethiopia has been a federal country since 1995, with two levels of government: one federal government and ten regional states. The constitution allocates mandates between the two levels of governments. One of the mandates jointly allocated for both levels of governments is the security sector. The defense is an exclusive mandate of the federal government, while police belongs to both levels of governments (Articles 51 and 52 of the constitution). The Constitution states that the federal government is empowered to defend and protect the Constitution and administer and organize national defense, public security, and federal police forces (55–7). Article 51(21) also empowers the federal government to enact laws regulating the possession and bearing of arms. The states are empowered to establish and

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41 Lieutenant General Tsadkan Gebretensai in an interview held in May 2021 talks about the TDF being organized in several divisions without indicating figures. Dimsti Weyane Interview with Lieutenant General Tsadkan Gebretensai <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McgqxJfVecY> 29 May 2021; Brook Abdu, Regional Special Forces: threats or safeties? <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/article/regional-special-forces-threats-or-safeties> *REPORTER* as accessed on 3 May 2021.

42 See his interview with Lieutenant General Tadesse Werede at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrOE75iL5k4> (no longer available).

43 Interview with a special police force commander of the State of Oromia, interview conducted on 4 June 2021 at the Police Commission of the State of Oromia, Finfine.

administer *a state police force*, and to maintain *public order and peace within the state* (Arts. 51 and 52(2 g) of the Constitution).<sup>44</sup> What constitutes a state police force and who ensures public order and peace within the regional state is however far from clear.

A closer look at relevant regional state constitutions and laws shows that they simply replicate the ambiguity at the federal level. Each regional state has its police force establishment proclamation. However, be it in the regional state constitutions or in the regional state police establishment legal norms, there is no specific provision that deals with the special police force.<sup>45</sup> None of these laws provide details or mention the special police by name<sup>46</sup> as a separate regional security apparatus.

The federal constitution and relevant regional state laws provide only for a regional state police force and it is not clear whether such a force also includes the special police (*Liyu Police* as it is called in Amharic), the constitutional status of which remains vague, if not contested. On one hand, it bears the name police albeit with the adjective *special* police and thus on appearance resembles the regular police of the regional states. On the other hand, as will be shown later, its mandate as it has evolved across time makes it look more of an army than a police force. Thus people ask, is it a police force or a member of the army? Is it a regional state army, if so can regional states have such an army?

### 3.1 The debates concerning the Special Police

Since its establishment, there has been an ongoing debate about the status and role of the regional state special police. The section that follows highlights the ambiguity concerning the mandate of the special police. It also presents the emerging narratives by different elite groups with respect to the mandate controversy and the reasons for the race behind the special police in regional states.

#### 3.1.1 The centrist elite's perspective

The role of the special police in the current state of political and security affairs in Ethiopia can be understood in the context of the political contestation between ethno-national elites that are looking for a more open political space with substantial autonomy in regional states and the centrist elite. The centrist elite (that often champions a more centralized federal

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44 Regional state constitutions Article 47, 2(f) of Oromia, the South, Amhara and Sidama revised constitutions.

45 Reference to all regional state constitution shows that special police is not mentioned in any of the texts.

46 See for example the 2001 revised Amhara region constitution, Amhara region Police Commission re-establishment Proclamation No. 216/2014 and The Revised Amahara region Police Officers' Administration, Council of Regional State Regulation No. 175/2018.

government, or if possible a decentralized unitary state) is tempted to use central power (both national defense, federal police, and even regional state special police) to achieve that mission. The centrist elite and those that are currently pushing the agenda of tearing apart ‘ethnic federalism’<sup>47</sup> argue that regional state special police are *unconstitutional*,<sup>48</sup> a threat to peace, stability, unity and the integrity of Ethiopia, and thus should be banned or dissolved (Endeshaw, 2020).<sup>49</sup> While regional states have the mandate to establish police to maintain peace and security, the argument goes that the mission of the special police as it operates now has taken over the mandate of the National Defense Force. Such a mission overlaps with the mandate of the army that contravenes the federal constitution. This seems to be the direction the federal government is pushing at the moment. A recent policy document of the federal government shows it has proposed to dissolve the regional state police, alleging that it is heavily militarized, it is against its mission, and is becoming a threat to peace, security, and the country.<sup>50</sup> The document further states that the special police is loyal to factional interests in regional states and is becoming a tool for extremist ethnic and religious groups.<sup>51</sup> The document centralizes the recruitment process of regional state police by subjecting it to federal control.<sup>52</sup> Regional state police, according to this document, are made *accountable*<sup>53</sup> to the Federal Police while reserving the administrative accountability to the regional states.<sup>54</sup> Reversing previous trends and violating the regional state mandate, it subjects the promotion and appointment of deputy commissioners and the commissioner of regional states to be made by the federal government (Ministry of Peace).<sup>55</sup> The document aims to limit the role of regional state police to routine law enforcement operation (crime prevention and control) within the regional state, and strictly limits the carrying of weapons by the same force.

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47 Dawit wrote ‘ethnic politics that has been institutionalized by the ruling party, for the last 28 years was the single cause...’ Dawit Woldegiorgis, ‘Ethiopia: on the Brinks’ <https://borkena.com/2019/04/10/ethiopia-a-country-on-the-brinks-by-dawit-woldegiorgis/> 10 April, 2019.

48 The Minister of the Ministry of Peace of the FDRE, Muferiat Kamil, while presenting her Ministry’s three months’ performance report to the House of Peoples’ Representatives (HPR) required the HPR to come up with a legal framework regulating regional special police forces, invoking that their establishment is ‘*unconstitutional*’. See for further details, Brook Abdu, Regional Special Forces: Threats or Safeties, the Reporter, Published 2 January 2021<<https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/article/regional-special-forces-threats-or-safeties>> accessed on 06 June 2021.

49 See Police Standard in the FDRE, December 2020, Addis Ababa, Policy Document p.67.

50 See Police Standard in the FDRE, December 2020, Addis Ababa, Policy Document pp. 78–61. Interview with expert involved with in the preparation of the document, Ministry of Peace 15 May 2021 Addis Ababa.

51 See Police Standard in the FDRE, December 2020, Addis Ababa, Policy Document p.58.

52 See Police Standard in the FDRE, December 2020, Addis Ababa, Policy Document P. 71

53 The policy document states that while the federal police is headed by Federal Police Commissioner General, the regional state police will be headed by Commissioner *whose status is one step lower* than the federal Commissioner General. See Police Standard in the FDRE, December 2020, Addis Ababa, Policy Document.

54 Police Standard in the FDRE, December 2020, Addis Ababa, Policy Document p.67.

55 Police Standard in the FDRE, December 2020, Addis Ababa, Policy Document p.47.

If one understands the context on the ground, however, it is not difficult to observe conflicting interests and trends. Even if the federal government was to regulate the matter in detail, as it did in this new federal policy document, it is unlikely that regional states will comply with it, and it could have consequences if implemented without creating broader consensus among major stake holders. A federal government effort to dissolve the regional state special police at the height of the protests (2017–2018) was objected to by the Oromia, Amhara and Somali regions. Another effort to do so in 2019 was objected by Tigray regional state.<sup>56</sup> Even after the federal government issued the policy, according to a key informant, ‘Oromia, Amhara, and Somali regional states have continued the recruitment and training of a special police force in their respective regional states.’<sup>57</sup> At the moment, the federal government also lacks the capacity and stature to enforce it. The Prosperity Party is not as cohesive as its predecessor the EPRDF that enforced its decisions through democratic centralism using its top-down party machinery. That explains the divergence between intention (issuing a law to regulate firearms) and the reality on the ground – regional states with heavily armed special police that could potentially threaten the federal government.

There are also indications that show the federal government itself is divided on the matter.<sup>58</sup> Some sources indicate the defense force does not want the special police to be dissolved or disarmed. The defense force knows its limits and the risk associated with its increased engagement in local conflicts, and thus is not necessarily against the deployment of special police in local conflicts. What the defense force wants is a ‘limited role of special police both in terms of weapons and size.’<sup>59</sup> The centrist elite and the Federal Police are however interested to dissolve and disarm the special police. Yet even within these elites, there is some divergence.

The Amhara elite used to condemn the special police, stating that this is a force that is destabilizing the country. Lately, however, they seem to be happy with the increased role of the regional state special police and have openly began promoting it.<sup>60</sup> The Federal Police seems generally against the regional state special police, but there is nothing it can do alone given the fragmented interest in the federal government.<sup>61</sup> Most other regional states seem to be happy to have their special police and it is not surprising to see the public announcement of successful completion of several rounds of trainings accompanied by

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56 Interview with a member of the Federal Police who has attended both events, Addis Ababa 26 May 2021.

57 Interview with a member of the Federal Police that has links with regional state police, Addis Ababa 5 June 2021.

58 Interview with former security head Addis Ababa 15 May 2021.

59 Interview with security expert based in Addis Ababa, 26 May 2021.

60 Former Amhara region head of the regional state police Abere Adamu is quoted in *The Reporter* as saying, the mandate of special police has no contradictions with the federal constitution. Brook Abdu, Regional Special Forces: threats or safeties? <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/article/regional-special-forces-threats-or-safeties/> *REPORTER* as accessed on 3 May 2021.

61 See public relations officer of the federal police interview with the Reporter

military displays in much the same way when armed forces complete routine military trainings.

### *3.1.2 The ethno-national groups' perspective*

From the focus group discussions and interviews, the claim on the part of regional states goes like this: as per the federal constitution, regional states have the mandate to establish and administer a state police force, and to maintain public order and peace within the state. Regional state special police are presented as an integral part of the right to self-government that logically follows from the provisions of the federal constitution (Articles 8, 39, 46 and 47) that guarantee political autonomy.

Ethiopia is a federation of nations and nationalities established in response to an age-old demand for self-government. Self-government in a federation is a broad mandate that empowers regional states with political, economic, social and security powers.<sup>62</sup> Besides, the Ethiopian constitution leaves reserve power to regional states (Article 52(1)). The argument is that a constitution that has allowed self-government and the right to secede (Article 39) cannot prohibit regional states from establishing special police. All added up, they argue that regional states have the mandate to establish regional state special police as a means to ensure self-government, peace and security within their territory.<sup>63</sup> The special police should therefore be treated as members of the regional state police force, which is expressly mentioned in the regional state constitutions and further elaborated in the regional state laws establishing the police commission.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the claim goes, the power emanates from the federal constitution itself.

While regional states have the mandate to establish police to maintain peace and security, the previous sections have shown clearly that the role and mission of the special police is not limited to maintaining the peace and security of the region. It has been engaged in mandates that compete with the mandates of the National Defense Force and the Federal Police. With increasing tension and at times open confrontation between the federal government and some regional states on one hand, and between regional states (horizontally), understanding the role of this force becomes critical in order to ensure the safety and security of citizens and its implications for the peace and security of the country.

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62 During the debate on the constitutionality of regional state elections in Tigray held in September 2020, Getachew Reda, TPLF senior leader said the regional state mandate to self-government includes the mandate to organize regional state elections, more so when the federal level Election Board is not willing to conduct the elections. Self-government and political autonomy includes the right to elect one's leaders and ensure security within its territory.

63 Interviews held with trainers and heads of special police in regional states in May 2021 show 'special police' should be treated as regular police for the sake of settling the legal controversy related to its mandate.

64 Interviews with independent experts and heads of police commissions in Amhara and Oromia regional states lead to this assertion.

In deeply divided societies like Ethiopia, where there is little trust within the political elite and the federation is composed of minority ethno-national groups without a clear demographic majority, self-government remains the means to ensure such minorities to become a majority at the constituent unit level. Accordingly, such groups have a ‘right of self-protection’ against central institutions that can become an instrument of tyranny that may be tempted to use force for factional interests (Tocqueville, 1990).

As indicated in the previous section, although later misused, special police in the Somali region were established to address a peculiar security concern in which the federal army faced difficulty understanding *local conflict dynamics*. Established by regional states, special police can effectively handle local security concerns as they better understand the local political and security context much better than the distantly located federal army and federal police. In a federation, regional states are considered laboratories<sup>65</sup> for trying new initiatives and policies that fit local contexts.

Lack of trust in federal security institutions and association with abuse of human rights and taking sides in local conflict, instead of trying to mediate and provide political solutions to emerging issues, is also major reason for the wide use of regional state special police. At the height of the protests (2015–2018), the federal army and the federal police were accused by Amhara and Oromia regional state activists as *Agazi*<sup>66</sup> – implying that they are a predominantly TPLF force. In the ongoing war between Tigray and the federal government, Tigrayan activists accuse the federal army as ‘the Derg in a new mask’. The Amhara special police in Tigray is equated with the notorious Hutu militia that triggered the Rwanda Genocide in 1994.<sup>67</sup> Debretsion Gebremichael, president of Tigray regional state recently stated:

‘The Tigray army is also non-negotiable. We were asked, ‘you say the constitution has to be affirmed and yet you go against it by keeping an army’. We have given an answer to it. We have been forced into it. We were massacred. The Ethiopian army – the one that is supposed to guard us from getting massacred – was itself engaged in massacring us. The one which massacres us

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65 In a dissenting Supreme Court decision Justice Louis Brandeis of the United States in *New State Ice Co. v. Liebmann* argued ‘It is one of the happy accidents of the federal system that a single courageous state may, if its citizens choose, serve as a laboratory, and try novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country.’ *New State Ice Co. v. Liebmann*, 285 U.S. 262, 311 (1932).

66 See debate about the *Agazi* at <https://hornaffairs.com/2016/02/08/jawar-mohammed-ethiopian-military-agazi/>

67 Tigray Media House (TMH), the only media outlet that presents details about the on-going war in Tigray from Tigrayans’ perspective, issued several evidences equating the role of Hutu militia and the Amhara region special police in western Tigray. See also Declan Walsh, *Ethiopia’s War Leads to Ethnic Cleansing in Tigray Region, U.S. Report Says* <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/26/world/middleeast/ethiopia-tigray-ethnic-cleansing.html> 23 May 2021; Servet Gunergok, *Ethnic cleansing being Committed in Tigray: Report* <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/ethnic-cleansing-being-committed-in-tigray-report/2158784> 23 May 2021.



can't be our protector. We have to have an army in order to exist. All this was done to us because we were condemned to be annihilated. Our guarantee for survival is our [military] force. They have to accept it'.<sup>68</sup>

A retired army General who was head of special police in the Amhara regional state stated, 'regional states have lost trust in federal institutions including the army. The army has been extremely weakened as a result of the war in Tigray. Regional states can only *count* on their own special police.'<sup>69</sup>

The situation with federal institutions in particular is worrisome. The shared-rule principle (Elazar, 1987:6) in a federation assumes that federal institutions are inclusive of all states and citizens. If not, they are seen as aliens by states and citizens that are not represented in these institutions. Equally important as institutions with a country-wide mandate, they are required to serve each state and the citizen on an equal basis and impartially. Federal institutions taking sides and failing to mediate local or intergovernmental conflicts means that they have lost their credibility and impartiality. They are seen as instruments of factional interests, and the deployment of security forces and the army is seen as an 'invading force' that has to be expelled by all means.<sup>70</sup> Evidences related to the crisis in Oromia and Amhara (2015–2018) or the devastating and ongoing war in Tigray (2020–2021) show that is largely the narrative from the local side.<sup>71</sup> Federal institutions are supposed to mediate impartially in disputes between regional states. Amhara and Tigray regional states have claims and counter claims over a disputed territory. Recently Prime Minister Abiy said, 'Wolkayit and Tselemti (the disputed territories) have always been part of Begemidir (the old name of Gondar).' The federal army is thus given a green light to side with the Amhara region and is thereby reduced to an agent of the Amhara elite, no longer an impartial Ethiopian defense force.<sup>72</sup>

Lastly, the federal government, including Prime Minister Abiy, has been publicly complaining that the federal army has not been able to enroll new recruits, not even 1,000 from two large regional states (Oromia and Amhara combined).<sup>73</sup> He was thus induced to call for all military aged males to join the army.<sup>74</sup> One senior political observer said:

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68 Tigray TV, <https://youtu.be/IKIUCxCK6-k> 15 June 2022. Thanks are due to the anonymous reviewer who brought this to my attention.

69 Interview 26 May 2021.

70 See Getachew Reda's interview (TPLF executive member) on TMH <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PufIoemmgU0&t=234s> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PufIoemmgU0> 27 May 2021.

71 'Ethiopia out of Oromia' was Jawar Mohamed's remark at a public demonstration in USA at the start of the Oromo protests see [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXah\\_qtW8sg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXah_qtW8sg) 'Eritrea-Ethiopia out of Tigray,' 'Amhara forces out of Tigray' 'Stop Genocide in Tigray' are the mottos of the Tigrayan activists at the moment.

72 See his speech on 1 July 2021 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJPw2EwNhx4>.

73 See Brook Abdu, Regional Special Forces: threats or safeties? <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/article/regional-special-forces-threats-or-safeties> *The Reporter* as accessed on 3 May 2021.

74 See at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/10/ethiopia-calls-on-civilians-to-join-army-to-fight-tigray-rebels>, as accessed on 23 September 2022.

regional special forces appear to have a growing influence on security while the once-vaunted ENDF is a shadow of its former self, hollowed out by the loss of the Northern Command, the removal of the Tigrayan officer corps and battlefield reverses in Tigray.<sup>75</sup>

On the contrary, regional states seem to face little problem in recruiting members to the special police force. In Tigray, young men and women are allegedly joining the TDF every day in hundreds.<sup>76</sup> The damage inflicted on civilians and civilian institutions under the pretext of ‘law enforcement operation’ has triggered the Tigrayan youth to rally behind the TDF more than any time before.<sup>77</sup> The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) claims the same.<sup>78</sup> Lately, the Amhara region too is recruiting youngsters to its special police. Why young men and women are interested to join regional state special police and not the federal army is an issue beyond the scope of this study, but it does hint that regional state police are perceived as more legitimate than the federal army/federal institutions. During 1995–2018, true or not the federal government was perceived as dominated by the TPLF, thus wide spread protests in two of the bigger regional states – Oromia and Amhara. OPDO and ANDM were increasingly perceived as puppet parties that did not genuinely represent the Amhara and Oromo interests in the federal government. The current federal institutions have little or no representatives from Tigray. The House of Peoples’ Representatives and the HoF have no representative from Tigray. The federal army and federal police have officially expelled nearly all members from Tigray. As a result of the above examples, federal institutions run under *thin* legitimacy.<sup>79</sup> Regional states on the other hand are perceived as legitimate representative of a particular ethno national group, and win better trust compared to federal institutions. In other words, while federal institutions are less inclusive and less legitimate, regional state institutions including special police have a ‘legitimate owner,’ the particular ethno national group/elite. According to a former army general and head of special police in one of the regional states, ‘one of the reasons for

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75 Report by senior EU Diplomat 30 May 2021, Addis Ababa.

76 Dimsti Weyane Interview with Lieutenant General Tsadkan Gebretensai <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McgqxJfVecY> 29 May 2021.

77 ‘It is at the same time a civil war, revenge, interethnic, territorial and international.’ Rene Lefort Rene Lefort, *Le Monde Afrique, Ethiopie* : « Les Tigréens sont mis à genoux et dépossédés des moyens de se relever » [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2021/06/03/ethiopie-les-tigreens-sont-mis-a-genoux-et-depossedes-des-moyens-de-se-relever\\_6082718\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2021/06/03/ethiopie-les-tigreens-sont-mis-a-genoux-et-depossedes-des-moyens-de-se-relever_6082718_3212.html) 03 June 2021; Ethiopia’s Tigray at serious risk of famine warns UN Official Ethiopia’s Tigray at ‘serious risk’ of famine, warns UN official | Food News | Al Jazeera 2 June 2021.

78 Rene Lefort, *Le Monde Afrique, Ethiopie* : « Les Tigréens sont mis à genoux et dépossédés des moyens de se relever » [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2021/06/03/ethiopie-les-tigreens-sont-mis-a-genoux-et-depossedes-des-moyens-de-se-relever\\_6082718\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2021/06/03/ethiopie-les-tigreens-sont-mis-a-genoux-et-depossedes-des-moyens-de-se-relever_6082718_3212.html) 03 juin 2021; <https://ethioheadlines.com/abiys-administration-is-in-full-crisis-internal-fighting-is-intensifying/> 17 May 2021.

79 Ann M. Fitz-Gerald, *Ethiopia’s Security Dilemmas* at <https://rusi.org/commentary/ethiopias-security-dilemmas> 18 July 2019 as accessed on 3 May 2021.

the proliferation of the special police is loss of trust in federal institutions including the army.<sup>80</sup> At the height of the mass killings in Benishangul Gumuz (2020), the then head of the Amhara region special police stated in public that if the federal government is not able to stop the killings he would order his police to intervene, stop the killings, and ensure law and order in Benishangul Gumuz state.<sup>81</sup> The Special Police then becomes the means for self-defense and resembles more of regional state defense and less of a police force.

One needs to understand the driving factors behind the competition over Special Police in Ethiopia. Federalism and devolution as a means to manage diversity and conflict assumes effective institutions for the day-to-day operation of political business, such as intergovernmental platforms for bargain and negotiation and impartial institutions such as Supreme Court or constitutional court to mediate intergovernmental disputes. Disagreements are expected to be resolved through compromise and dialogue using the existing political institutions such as legislative bodies, intergovernmental platforms in addition to party level negotiations and if that fails using legal means, i.e. the supreme court/constitutional court that serves as the ultimate guardian of the constitution. Constitutionalism and the rule of law require that ultimately the political institutions submit to the guardian of the constitution. Ethiopia failed to build these institutions and the EPRDF, now rebranded as Prosperity Party (PP, after the TPLF declined to join) relied on its own party machinery and this worked to some extent: at least partly because of democratic centralism, combined with elitist leaders such as Meles Zenawi (1991–2012) (Aalen, 2000; Clpaham, 2017). In the absence of such leaders and with the weakening or fragmentation of the party system, there is literally nothing that can serve as a platform to sort out normal political business. Failing public institutions, the different actors thus race over the special police and informal forces as a means to safeguard their interests.<sup>82</sup> One clear example in this regard is disagreements over regional state boundaries (Oromia-Somali; Afar-Somali; Amhara-Oromia, Amhara-Tigray to mention some) that have often been managed by sending either federal police or the army, while regional states often resorted to using their special police. Federal-regional state disagreements as in the case of the Sidama referendum or fragmentation in the South (Wolayta demands for self-government) and the most devastating one – the war in Tigray – demonstrate the death of political institutions.

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80 Interview 26 May 2021.

81 Brook Abdu, Regional Special Forces: threats or safeties? <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/article/regional-special-forces-threats-or-safeties> REPORTER as accessed on 3 May 2021.

82 Rene Lefort, 'Ethiopia's war in Tigray is 'but the tip of the iceberg when it comes to conflicts ravaging the country' the Africa report <https://www.theafricareport.com/84350/ethiopias-war-in-tigray-is-but-the-tip-of-the-iceberg-when-it-comes-to-conflicts-ravaging-the-country/> 30 April 2021.

In all the above cases, the federal government sent its army (a so-called command post) and imposed martial law to deal with political questions.<sup>83</sup> Force and coercion becomes the only means of communication and the order of the day. In other words, force and coercion is the means to fundamentally alter the political order and thus control over the army and security institutions becomes critical target (Taylor, 2007:421). It is politics by other means now taken to the black market from the normal political market: the institutions of federalism have become dysfunctional and tools for promoting factional interests thereby lose their legitimacy. Control over force, in the absence of functioning institutions or weak institutions controlled by factional interests, is thus a survival issue for those that have lost faith and trust in federal institutions. All the more, those promoting factional interests aim to control force to dominate or eliminate others and the survival issue becomes an existential question. What this implies is that politics has been militarized in Ethiopia. It also shifts the role of the army and security that is primarily designed to ensure the territorial integrity of the country against external aggression.

The military and the security apparatus has become a tool for domestic politics as it is hijacked by factional interests in violation of basic constitutional principles. For example, Article 87(4) of the Ethiopian constitution states ‘The armed forces shall carry out their functions free of any partisanship to any political organization.’ The moment the army is deployed in domestic affairs when the leadership fails to provide a political solution to emerging issues and imposes factional interests it loses its impartiality and complicates domestic politics. Thus, politics has to be returned back to the political table through dialogue and political settlement if anyone is to reduce/control the proliferation of command posts, and the use of special police and other informal forces. A perception of partiality against federal institutions means that one of the conflicting parties will resort to self-defense, anticipating that there is no impartial solution to the conflict.<sup>84</sup> Thus, a failure to provide an impartial political solution to local conflicts by federal institutions fuels the engagement of the Special Police. At the root of the crisis is thus the lack of a political solution to local conflicts by relevant institutions. Parties to conflict as a result resort to violence as a means to achieve their goal, and the consequence is grave human rights violations and close to four million internally displaced people<sup>85</sup> as a result of ethnic

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83 See Simon Marks, Ethiopia Declares Emergency After Attack on Federal Military Base 04 November 2020 <https://www.voanews.com/africa/ethiopia-declares-emergency-after-attack-federal-military-base>; Ethiopia federal forces take over security in protest-hit region: Fana <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-politics-idUSKCN1UI29Z> .

84 Ann M. Fitz-Gerald, *Ethiopia's Security Dilemmas* at <https://rusi.org/commentary/ethiopias-security-dilemmas> 18 July 2019 as accessed on 3 May 2021.

85 Ethiopia National Displacement Report 7, Round 24: December 2020 – January 2021 <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-national-displacement-report-7-round-24-december-2020-january-2021#:~:text=Ethiopia%20faces%20significant%20internal%20displacement,ethnic%20and%20border%2Dbased%20disputes>

conflicts and a possible fragmentation of the country.

The overall point is that regional state Special Police cannot be seen in isolation. It is part and parcel of the ongoing political debate and the federal system in the country, and unless the debate is sorted out through some kind of dialogue and political settlement, the role of the Special Police will remain contested depending on which side dominates the political scene at one time or another.

From the centrist elite's perspective, greedy political ambitions and extremism aside, maintaining the unity of the country, social cohesion and country-wide protection of citizenship rights remain a top priority. This is understandable. The Amhara elite, accompanied by the Guraghe and a section of the Oromo, were key players starting from Menlik's project of nation building all the way through the last century. Liberal clauses of the constitution and enforcement of such basic rights and freedoms using an independent judiciary, along with a constitutional court that serves as a guardian of the constitution, can address such concerns. Ethno-national forces crave for genuine self-government free from interference of the federal government (be it party channels or otherwise) and inclusion at the federal level. They suspect whomever controls the center often tends to centralize power and resources. Equal or proportional representation of regional states in federal institutions, consensus based decision making on key political and economic issues, and genuine autonomy to regional states will go a long way in addressing such concerns. The interests of both camps are not necessarily incompatible and can be subject to negotiation. The revision of the constitution could thus be made once a dialogue addresses the outstanding issues. Political agreements are formalized through a constitutional pact which all actors agree to abide by. Free and fair elections will then follow as a means to hand over power to an elected government.

#### **4. Police power in federations: Some comparative insights**

Comparative studies on some federal systems show four alternatives in dividing police power. Some federal and devolved systems like Nigeria and South Africa opt for a unitary arrangement in which the respective constitutions organize a unitary national police assuming a country-wide mandate with little or no sub-unit based police.<sup>86</sup> Nigerian constitution Article 214(1) for example states 'There shall be a police force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force, and subject to the provisions of this section *no other police force* (italics by the author) shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof.' The constitution envisages the possibility of opening branches in the states, but even then it is not a state police but the national Nigerian police force opening

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<sup>86</sup> See [www.cleen.org/policing.%20driver%20of%20change.pdf](http://www.cleen.org/policing.%20driver%20of%20change.pdf)

branches in the states.

The South African constitution also provides for a single police system. The constitution Article 199(1) stipulates ‘The security services of the Republic consist of a single defence force, *a single police service* and any intelligence services established in terms of the Constitution.’ Article 205 provides more elaborate sections about the national police system. It states ‘The national police service must be structured to function in *the national, provincial and, where appropriate, local spheres* (italics by the author) of government. National legislation must establish the powers and functions of the police service and must enable the police service to discharge its responsibilities effectively, taking into account the requirements of the provinces.’ Thus in South Africa, institutions concerned with public safety are mainly located at the national level. The key institution is the South African Police Service.

This unitary approach is simple and straightforward and does not give rise to complication. It is also very economical, as there is only one system operating throughout the country with little or no duplication of resources. This approach of organizing the police is a consequence of the overall federal design that aims to integrate the sub units and focuses more on national unity than on empowering the sub units. The major ethno-national groups in both countries are, for example, divided into several states to make sure they do not become a nation that may in the end threaten the country. The focus is thus more on unity and national integration, not on accommodation and empowering the sub units.<sup>87</sup> In the comparative literature (Choudhry, 2008), on federalism they are called integrationist federations.

The second alternative is what we can refer to as executive federalism, where the federal level of government has just about all the constitutional powers to make security legislation, but the administration and enforcement of that legislation tends to fall under the purview of the constituent units. Under this arrangement, the federal government tends to have only very limited enforcement abilities, including a federal criminal police, a border police, an immigration police and a security police dealing specifically with threats against the state (Leuprecht, 2012). This is the case in Germany, where the states largely administer and enforce both federal and state law. India also resembles the German system, in which police power is divided between the union and state governments, and yet both levels are integrated through several mechanisms. In principle there are union and state police, but senior level police positions in the states are filled in by appointments made through the union government. The recruitment and training process of such senior police positions is also made by the union government to ensure standards and uniformity in the police system (Indian Constitution Art 355 and seventh schedule).

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<sup>87</sup> These types of federations are called integration or centripetal federations. See Choudhry (2008).

Summarizing the Indian Police system, Taylor (2007:427) wrote:

India has a system in which police power is largely a state matter. However, several important safeguards are in place to reduce the threat of complete local capture of the police. Analogous to the Indian Administrative Service, the Indian Police Service (IPS) provides a steel frame for the maintenance of India's centralized federalism. The IPS recruits and trains officers throughout the country, and then appoints them to state governments. The goal is to bring a national perspective to the administration of a country riven by centrifugal and divisive tendencies. Furthermore, the central government maintains several substantial paramilitary forces that can be called upon by state governments or, if necessary, imposed by the federal government. Often the Indian state has pursued a carrots and sticks approach in relations with recalcitrant regions, in which bargaining is combined with the intervention of the security forces against armed militant.

Public security in India is thus a task divided between the union government and the states, but with plenty of overlapping and conflicting responsibilities. Despite a division of power, the constitution authorizes the union government to intervene in public security and declare emergency, a power most frequently used during the 1970s as a means to remove elected provincial leaders from the opposition during the once dominant Congress era, but which has now been effectively regulated by the Supreme Court. In a famous decision in 1994, the Supreme Court declared a Union government emergency unconstitutional, and in several other decisions the same court entrenched the federalism principle into the constitution, setting a limit to its mandate.<sup>88</sup>

The third approach is when there is clear division of mandates between the federal government and the constituent units, also called the dual model, as in Ethiopia, but as explained with significant overlapping mandates. The logic of the dual model is however very clear: in as much as legislative, executive and judicial powers are divided between the federal and state governments, by the same logic, police power is also divided between the two levels of governments but again with some overlaps. The emergence of special police in addition to the regular police in regional states and their resemblance to the defense force (an exclusively federal power in nearly all federations) rather than police power brings its own controversy.

The fourth approach refers to federations that allocate wide police power to states with only limited powers reserved to the federal government. In the United States of America, the federal police power is limited, most of it is being left for states. Furthermore, federal police power is distributed in several special agents. Federal law enforcement focuses

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88 *S. R. Bommai v. Union of India* ([1994] 2 SCR 644 : AIR 1994 SC 1918 : (1994) 3 SCC1) .

mostly on interstate and international crime. The U.S. Department of Justice regulates different federal law enforcement agencies such as the Immigration and Naturalization Services, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the U.S. Marshals Services.<sup>89</sup>

As Bermeo (2002) stated, the United States is a ‘coming together’ federation where semi-autonomous states decided to establish a new federal government following the near collapse of the confederation. The states have thus retained substantial power, as they were not sure how the new federal government would behave. They have also retained the residual power. The 10th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution provides that, “The powers not delegated to the United States by the constitution nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.” Thus, states have the jurisdictional authority to enact criminal law statutes, which are enforced by state and local government. Although significant variations exist among states, state police are in charge of enforcing state laws. In response to the 9/11 threats of terrorism and increased crimes, the Home Land Security Act of 2002 has designed a system for interaction between federal and state law enforcement agencies, but that does not change the system altogether.

As can be seen, owing to the variations of the experiences of federations, the nature and historical origin of the polities, no generalized theoretical framework can be made on the allocation of competencies on police power between the different spheres of governments. Some have adopted a unitary model, others an integrated approach, and on the extreme end are those federations that leave substantial police power to states. Ethiopia has adopted a dual system for the allocation of police power, but the assessment indicates a much more complicated reality owing to the distinct nature of the special police. The distinct nature of the federation, its political elite, and the political contestations, has given rise to a peculiar challenge.

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations

An investigation into the federal constitution and regional state laws shows both levels of government are empowered to establish their own respective police force. The states are empowered to establish and administer *a state police force*, and to maintain *public order and peace within the state*; however, what constitutes a state police force, and whether that includes special police, is contested. Each regional state has its police force establishment proclamation, but neither regional state constitutions nor regional state police establishment laws contain specific provisions that deal with a special police force.

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89 No author, *Policing in Federal Countries*, a Publication of the Forum of Federations pp. 13–19.



Confronted with a special police force that has a contested legal mandate, yet is a very real institution in Ethiopia, it seems that dialogue and political settlement are the way out of the current stalemate. Controversies revolving around the special police are part of the broader political disagreement about the nature of the Ethiopian state, its system of governance and the nature of the political elite that controls power. Ethiopia is deeply divided. Territorially based cleavages that have survived more than five decades of central onslaught continue to demand more, not less autonomy. On the other hand, the centrist elite continues to manipulate federal institutions to centralize power. This in turn reinforces ethno national forces. As the discussion and analysis in different sections show, at the moment there is little distinction between the defense force proper and regional state special police. Its mandate and level of engagement show it resembles the army more than the regular police. It has been engaged in interregional state conflicts and securing international borders. Retired army generals are joining the regional state special police, blurring the distinction between defense force and special police. The fact that the impact of the army is depleting owing to the ongoing civil war in the country, and the constituent unit special police is slowly taking over the army's mandate, implies the center is losing control and the country is slowly falling apart along ethno national fault lines.

To reduce the threat of fragmentation, the interests of both camps – centrists and ethno-nationalists – that are not necessarily incompatible, can be subject to an all-inclusive negotiation. Equal or proportional representation of regional states in federal institutions, consensus-based decision making on key political and economic issues, and genuine autonomy to regional states will go a long way in addressing such concerns. Once trust is built, the fate of the special police can be negotiated – whether it should be retained, integrated to the regular police or the army, or dissolved altogether.

There are several options available to regulate the special police. The first option, proposed by the centrist elite, is integrating the regional special police into either the national defense forces or federal police, along the unitary security model. The recent “Police Standard” aims to do this by making the special police accountable to the federal police (while reserving the administrative accountability to the regional states) and centralizing the appointments.

This approach however works well in countries that are not deeply divided and where there is harmony between the two levels of government. Such harmony is nonexistent in Ethiopia at the moment. Given the high degree of political mobilization of ethno-national groups and the polarization and fragmentation within the political elite, attempts to dissolve the regional state special police could well add fuel to fire.

The second option is to adopt the framework model. Under this arrangement, the federal government has the constitutional powers to make framework security legislation, but

the administration and enforcement of that legislation tends to fall under the purview of the constituent units. A federal framework law would set the guiding principles and standards for the special police forces, such as the nature of their training, mandate, level of engagement, and weapons it is allowed to carry, but it would leave the details for regional states to regulate. A forum of intergovernmental relations between the two levels of governments would coordinate, monitor, and supervise based on the framework law and sort out any disagreements based on the principles of intergovernmental relations.

This option remains ideal but would require building of trust between the federal government and regional states currently missing in Ethiopia. It also requires good faith and commitment to the federal principle from both sides. Otherwise the federal government may exhaust the entire security field in the name of framework legislation and leave nothing to states and turn the system to effectively a unitary state. Ethiopia's political elite that controls central power has shown that this is a very high possibility.

The third proposal would be to formalize a clear division of mandates between the federal and regional governments. As legislative, executive and judicial powers are divided between the federal and state governments, police power too would be divided. It would limit regional special police engagement within the territory of the regional state and prevent its involvement in interregional conflicts and border security. However, the emergence of special police in Ethiopia and its resemblance to the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), as well as the heavy weapons it carries and its involvement in interregional conflicts, cast doubt on the feasibility of this model. The biggest challenge in this respect is building trust between federal and regional state governments actors. We have indicated that dialogue and political settlement is critical in sorting out the political issues that triggered the rise of the special police. Once trust is improved through this process, the special police of regional state could be integrated into the ENDF and assume country wide mandate. We noted already the size of the army has been depleted as a result of the war in Tigray and integrating the special police to ENDF could fill the gap and reduce any risk that may come with dissolving the special police. Regional states will then have regular police only whose role is limited to ensuring peace and order and prevention and detection of crimes within each regional state. As depicted in the interview by the President of Tigray regional state, this option however is unlikely to be adopted in the short run.

The last option is linked to the concept of politically mobilized cleavages introduced in the first section and how to manage them. We noted already a loose confederal system that transfers power to constituent units and a consensus-based decision making at the center balances the claim by such groups for exit on one hand and those that claim to maintain unity on the other. If this proposal is pushed to its logical end, this would mean constituent units not only retain much of the political power but also their special police as the federal

army and federal police has been accused of falling into partisan and factional interests. Federal institutions have also failed to mediate conflicts impartially. Devolving power and security to the states could then lower the stakes at the center. In particular, this seems the only sensible option to address Tigray's security concern short of secession.

Whichever approach Ethiopia adopts, enhancing the system of political and judicial control, as well as ensuring accountability, remains critical. Special police are associated with widespread abuses; their rapid growth, increased militarization, and involvement in a variety of conflicts in Ethiopia are highly concerning. The devastating impact from fighting between special police forces, currently on display in Amhara and Tigray, Afar-Somali, Amhara-Beni Shangul, Oromia-Somali are causing havoc to the country. If left unchecked, regional special police forces could be an existential threat to Ethiopia.

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Rethinking the Contemporary Influences  
of Commerce on Language Use:  
Lessons for the Åland Islands from an Imperfect  
Comparison with Madawaska, Maine

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### Abstract

Located in between, but separated from, the mainlands of Finland and Sweden, the Åland Islands have for a century negotiated complex relationships of politics, language and culture with both regions. Åland is an autonomous territory of Finland but its language base is distinctly Swedish rather than Finnish. Technically, Åland's single official Swedish language is protected by the Finnish constitution and even a ruling of the Council of the League of Nations. But Ålanders have long feared incursions from Finland that might erode the protections for Åland's Swedish speech. In the academic literature these fears have largely been addressed in terms of the legal competences held by Åland as an island territory and/or the politics that drive Åland's relationship with its metropole Finland. This research note shows that the Swedish language in Åland may be at threat from a novel angle, namely shifts in both language and imagined community that can occur in the wake of changing global business relationships. To explain this threat, the research note explores the corresponding shifts that have transformed the remote and formerly bilingual region of Madawaska in the northeast United States. Although from a distant location – geographically, politically and culturally – this story of Madawaska stands as an important and potentially controversial cautionary tale for Åland.

### About the author

Kevin Sobel-Read is a US-trained lawyer, legal scholar and anthropologist. Currently Associate Professor and Deputy Dean, Director of Teaching and Learning at the Newcastle School of Law and Justice, Australia, Kevin has previously served, among other roles, as Senior Research Fellow in the Faculty of Law at the University of Turku, Finland. In addition to receiving a Masters (MA) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Cultural Anthropology from Duke University, USA (2012), and a Juris Doctor (JD) from the New York University School of Law (2002), Kevin has completed two years of study at the University of Linköping in Sweden, following a year of high school at the Putaan Lukio in Tornio, Finland. Kevin's research addresses ideas of sovereignty and in particular Indigenous sovereignty and the sovereignty of small island nations and territories, with a focus on relationships between law, capital flow and governance.

### Keywords

The Åland Islands, Madawaska, territorial sovereignty, international commerce,  
global value chains, protection of regional language and culture

## 1. Åland / Finnish + Swedish intersections

Located both beautifully and strategically in the Baltic Sea between Finland and Sweden, the Åland Islands have been the subject of extensive scholarly engagement. The town of Madawaska, Maine, however, at the north-easternmost corner of the United States, sits largely outside of academic discourse, unheard of by most. For reasons that I will explain, I believe that the story of Madawaska – in regard to language, culture and commerce – can and should be of interest to thinkers and commentators on the potential future directions of Åland’s special Swedish-speaking status and characteristics.

For purposes of Åland, Madawaska is interesting here not because it is identical to Åland but rather because its dissimilar trajectories nevertheless suggest possibilities that stand outside much of the current Åland debate.

Here I should make clear that I am neither trying nor pretending to [re-]solve the challenges facing Åland. I desire instead to disrupt the current channels of debate by suggesting pathways to new ideas and possibilities that exist and may in the future open up in and around Åland, specifically at the intersections of language, culture and commerce (even if not necessarily in that order). Let me explain.

The Åland Islands – most commonly referred to simply as Åland – is a region of some 6,500 islands that lies geographically in between the mainlands of, as noted, Sweden and Finland. The territory is an excellent example of what Karlsson refers to as a sub-national island jurisdiction “where intelligent strategic agents make creative and innovative use of their material and immaterial resources, including jurisdictional powers.” (Karlsson 2009:139). Today, Åland maintains a population of over 29,000 (ÅSUB: Statistics and Research Åland), with more than a third in the main town of Mariehamn (Spiliopoulou Åkermark et al 2019:3). The economy is driven by tourism, as both inspired and facilitated by Åland’s opportune location between the national capitals of Sweden and Finland. Åland has taken advantage of this central location by creating itself as a destination for many of the ferries that daily criss-cross the intervening waters between Stockholm on the one side and Helsinki and Turku on the other.

Åland has a complex and interesting history, much of which is outside the scope of this article. Most relevantly, the Åland Islands were during much of modern history a domain of the Swedish Kingdom. In following, the home language of the people of Åland has for centuries been Swedish.

Finland also, for some six centuries, belonged to Sweden. The administration of Åland during this period was managed out of the Finnish city of Turku (Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2019:2). When Sweden was defeated by Russia in 1809, it gave up Finland – together with Åland – to the Russian empire (Joenniemi 2014:81). (It might be noted that through both Swedish and Finnish rule the Finns were remarkably successful in preserving their



own elaborate language, and therefore have waged their own heroic linguistic battles over time.) With Finland's independence in 1917, Åland became a part of independent Finland.

Many of the inhabitants of Åland were not, however, happy about being allocated to Finland (Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2019:5–6; for a more complex picture see Nihtinen 2017:51–54). This is not surprising, given that the Ålanders spoke Swedish and maintained strong social and commercial ties with Sweden. The matter received international attention and ultimately the Council of the League of Nations ruled that Åland should continue to belong to Finland, albeit with protections in regard to its Swedish language and culture (Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2019:6). The ruling provides a number of specific safeguards for Åland, including “internationally guaranteed self-governance,” a local assembly with “wide-ranging executive power within Åland’s autonomy”, and the right to retain Swedish as the sole official language (Joenniemi 2014:84). Åland expert Professor Markku Suksi has cited Åland’s self-government status vis-à-vis Finland as “the oldest existing autonomy arrangement in the world” (2013:51).

Two major challenges have previously presented themselves to the extensive patchwork of laws that protect the vibrancy of the Swedish language spoken by the vast majority of Ålanders. First, there has for over a century been a fear among many Ålanders that the Finnish national government could seek to minimise or even remove the special protections that apply to Åland (e.g. Öst 2016). And second, perhaps somewhat ironically, Finland’s membership in the European Union has in fact constricted some of the powers of self-rule that Åland has fought so hard to sustain (e.g. Silverström 2008), even if other powers have been enhanced through EU membership. These two challenges, which Åland has so far weathered with remarkable resilience, have received direct attention in the academic literature, largely in regard to the legal competences that Åland possesses as an autonomous territory (e.g. Suksi 2013; H. Jansson 2007; Hepburn 2014; Nihtinen 2017).

I suggest here, however, that Åland’s Swedish-language foundation is currently at risk from a new avenue of erosion from Finnish forces. This new avenue is not in the traditional form of law or politics but rather is being carried into the islands by means of contemporary business relationships. And although it is too early to tell, it is possible that the COVID-19 pandemic has set in motion subtle changes that will heighten these risks.

Certainly, similar phenomena are evolving at myriad locations around the globe. My intent is not to present Åland as unique but rather the opposite, to argue that Åland is not unique and therefore, more importantly, not immune to these global trends. I use the example of Madawaska in part because the story there is so traceable, so clear; but of course, other stories exist in other locations, each with their own insight, and hopefully researchers will continue to map – and to connect – these developments.

## **2. The relevance of my own place in the story**

The evidence to support my claims is drawn from events that have unfolded in the far away – and formerly French-speaking – town of Madawaska, Maine in the United States. I will turn shortly to Madawaska, but first it is essential that I place myself in the story. This placement is perhaps as much about the legitimacy of my authority as a scholar in this particular area as it is about framing the novel nature of my perspective, which, as I will explain, arose through a set of lived experiences.

For my part, I grew up far from Åland, in a small town called Macon, Georgia, in the American Deep South. When I was 15 years old I packed up and moved for a full year to Tornio, Finland, just below the Arctic Circle. As fate would have it, Tornio is a border town that is situated on the very point where Finland and Sweden meet at the top of the Gulf of Bothnia. Tornio, together with Haparanda, the Swedish town across the river border, form a larger community.

The border between Tornio and Haparanda is, thanks to the political integration of the EU, a politically open one. The border was likewise largely open even when I arrived in 1986, such that we could pass back and forth at will. Indeed, from my adopted home in Tornio, I crossed over to Haparanda every few days in order to make some purchase or other that was either cheaper or better on the Swedish side of the border. (For example, Haparanda had the only dedicated CD shop in the area, and also, importantly, boasted the best hamburgers.)

I arrived in Tornio in June and was doggedly determined to learn Finnish, a language well known for its complexity. By December I had asked my host family to stop speaking English to me and by the end of the year I found I could fully express anything that I wanted in Finnish, even if my grammar was not always particularly graceful. On the Swedish side of the border most residents and shop-keepers were bilingual and so my Finnish carried me there as well. But I developed a growing fascination for the many small differences that animated the peoples on either side of the border. So back and forth I went, for a whole year, watching, listening, and driving my host family crazy with my many questions.

Two years later I decided to pursue this fascination by learning more about the “other side”: I enrolled in university in Sweden. I went on to spend four years in the country, mostly in Linköping and Örebro, studying and working, including translating Swedish books to English. I was enchanted by the language and now speak only Swedish with my two teenaged children.

The point is that my experience on the Finnish-Swedish border shaped my life. At the intersection of law and anthropology, much of my academic research has focused on issues of sovereignty precisely because sovereignty signifies not only boundaries but also the cultural phenomena – like language – that can flourish within them.

In 2019, I was honoured to spend, with my family, three months as a guest researcher at the University of Turku in Finland. Turku is somewhat of a bilingual city and – speaking Swedish at home and in a location where my children studied in a Swedish-language school – I was again immersed in overlapping environments of Finnish and Swedish. How could I not, then, visit Åland myself to begin to experience its unique position in regard to such overlap?

Åland is a magnificent place: friendly, pretty, and with a beautiful dialect of Swedish. One of the things that strikes me about Åland is the degree of defensiveness about their Swedish language and the culture it animates. The use of language itself is in fact institutionalised – and protected by law – in a number of ways:

Swedish is the official language of Åland. It is used in state administration, Åland administration as well as municipal administration. Moreover, as a rule, Swedish is the language used in contacts between Åland officials and state officials. (Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2019:25)

Further, to be granted a legal right of domicile in Åland, applicants in most instances must demonstrate that they are “satisfactorily proficient in the Swedish language” (Öst 2017:224).

As a scholar, I see two overlapping aspects to the efforts of Ålanders to maintain these language protections. On the one hand, there is the question of law, structure and competencies: what is Åland *permitted* to do in regard to rules about language? On the other hand, there is the experience of Swedish languageness and the unique culture of the islands. We might say: what does it *mean* to be an Ålander?

That meaning articulates itself in many ways. For instance, Åland has its own flag. Of course, the having of a flag – and the prolific display of that flag – speaks volumes. I myself was quite interested in the fact that Åland’s car license plate numbers all begin with the letter Å. This may not seem noteworthy, given that the name of Åland itself begins with this letter. The symbolic force becomes clearer when it is explained that Åland is the *Swedish* name of the islands (they are called Ahvenanmaa in Finnish); further, the letter ‘Å’ is, itself, a Swedish letter that does not exist in the Finnish alphabet (other than to make it possible to represent Swedish words). So the Å of the license plate numbers is a bit like a slap in the face to the Finnish metropole: it says, in effect, “we are not you.”

But there is real fear in Åland about incursions against their language protections (e.g. Öst 2017). That fear has driven Åland politics for a hundred years now, with some ebb and flow (see Nihtinen 2017). Most recently, during Finland’s conservative/nationalist government from 2015 to 2019, Ålanders’ foreboding that mainland Finland would revoke some or all of Åland’s special language status was once again acute.

So far, in any event, Åland has succeeded impressively with its protections of its Swedish languageness. And, again, the literature on the legal *competences* of Åland for the most part supports the sustainability of these protections. And I hope that to be true. But troubling questions do exist about whether, and how, small regional cultures and languages can survive today in a globally integrated market. In this regard my time in Åland caused me to think back on yet another border that I lived on, this one in a very remote – and historically French-speaking – region of the US and Canada.

The story is worth telling in detail because it provides insight for Åland. I hasten to reiterate that the insight is not derived out of any exactness of the comparison. Indeed, as will be quite clear, any comparison between Madawaska and Åland will necessarily be imperfect due to a range of factors that include the geography, history, language and culture in each, not to mention the diverse legal and political frameworks, such that Finland is officially a bilingual country whereas the United States is not; the Swedish language is protected in Åland whereas the French language in Madawaska is not; the list goes on. There is then perhaps a temptation to dwell on the differences at the expense of the similarities. I continue to maintain, however, that the differences neither taint the insight nor discredit the conclusions: Madawaska tells us that there are significant conversations yet to be had in this area, as well as important research still to be inspired.

### **3. Locating Madawaska**

Nestled on the very northern tip of the state of Maine, the small town of Madawaska is in many ways remote. From the rest of the US, for instance, it is more than a six-hour drive up to it from the city of Portland. And if you make that trip, you'll discover that more than two full hours before reaching your destination, Interstate Highway 95 just ends. As if indicating that American infrastructure planners felt there was no reason to travel farther north, the national highway simply veers off into Canada well before reaching the top of the state.

Madawaska itself, stretching along the Canadian border, lies in the shadow of the significantly larger and solidly French-speaking population of the city of Edmundston, New Brunswick. The majority of Madawaska's own residents are the descendants of Acadians who settled the area in the late 1700s. Madawaskans have thus traditionally been French-speaking. Yet, after more than two hundred years of maintaining French as a first language, local residents are currently shifting toward English with a corresponding recalibration in imagined community. Why?

The answer is more complex than it might initially appear. First, as to language, Madawaskans are not currently subject to targeted nationalist agendas that seek to convert

them to English speakers (or, aside from some local activism, to have them retain French either). Their language shift thus cannot be explained purely by politics. Second, the shift cannot be driven by surrounding cultural magnetism or mass-media influences. After all, unlike their Cajun cousins in Louisiana, Madawaskans are not a linguistic minority in their larger community. Au contraire, Madawaska is a considerable distance from English-language political or cultural centres, pressed instead against the much-larger and thoroughly French-speaking Edmundston. In fact, the dominant culture along this whole stretch of the Saint John River Valley is francophone. Edmundston surely therefore could provide to the people of Madawaska a more than adequate anchor of French language culture and media, and even politics. But it does not.

Moreover, given that early settlers set up residence on both sides of the river that now separates the US and Canada, most of the families in the region have branches in both countries. In light of these genealogical connections, and also because of the historical homogeneity in the area, many of the residents have long possessed dual imagined communities, one of the US and the other of francophone Canada. The shift to English as a first language, however, is severing the Canadian component from the imagined community of the residents of Madawaska. In other words, the shift to English is causing this dual-community identification to be replaced by an American community that is increasingly sole and exclusive.

As I will explain, existing scholarship fails to explain these shifts. But the failure is fortuitous because it invites the investigation of elements of nationalism and community identity that otherwise have gone unnoticed. Here, because of Madawaska's particular characteristics, those formerly hidden elements become visible. Indeed, far from Boston or Portland – far, even, from Bangor – the town serves as a rare site for examining theories of nationalism and community, uncontaminated by the typically contested forces that historically have impacted Åland and other places, including power struggle, political debate, and even the influences of media and popular culture.

As such an investigation will demonstrate, these transformations in Madawaskans' language use – which reflect the corresponding change in national cultural identity – stem from a two-part process. The first involves the circumstances that cause monetary relationships to connect Madawaskans to the English-speaking US/Maine rather than to the often-closer French-speaking Canada/New Brunswick. Just as Ong argues that “economic calculation” has become “a major element of diasporic subjects' choice of citizenship” (1998:136), economic possibility has been a major element of Madawaskans' choice to look south for business partners. Key here is that the framework for such economic possibility has been transformed over the past 40 years: changes to both the form and function of transnational corporate commerce – changes that are part of the evolution of global supply

chains into what have been termed *global value chains*, which I elaborate on below – are having dramatic effects on the daily lives of individuals who are increasingly implicated, with a resulting impact on group identity.

Second, while these monetary relationships provide the *pathways*, the shift in national cultural identity can only be fully actualised because the imagined community of the US is one that *fits*. (Whether the imagined community of Finland is one that “fits” for Åland is of course another matter, but as I note below there is some research suggesting at least a basis here (Tillitsstudie för Åland 2018:68–70).) In other words, the residents of Madawaska are not imagining themselves into a foreign community but instead into one in which they already recognise themselves. This is significant because in a vacuum, Madawaskans might instead have trended, consistent with the dominant culture in the region, toward an imagined francophone community that is by consequence primarily Canadian.

As a sign that there is a relationship between nationalism and global value chains, the role of Madawaska here is therefore significant. Moreover, these processes unfolding in the remote Saint John River Valley have broader relevance. For one, as the situation in Madawaska confirms, the contemporary political economy simply demands that far-flung economic actors, such as those in the Saint John River Valley, become more intimately integrated in their respective global value chains, systematically connected with corporate headquarters and lead firms. Furthermore, Madawaska simultaneously demonstrates not only that the economic sustainability of regions like the Saint John River Valley is dependent on integration into global value chains (as has been widely claimed: see e.g. OECD, WTO and World Bank Group Report), but also that such integration impacts national identity.

For my part, I engage in these questions by relying on a serendipitous and potentially novel methodological manoeuvre. Here, the ethnographic work that I do is based on a trove of emails that I myself wrote. On its face, such a source of fieldnotes would hardly be either surprising or of interest. What makes my methodology unique, or at least uncommon, is that I wrote the emails in question many years before I had ever taken my first undergraduate course in anthropology. As such, although the observations and the very contents of the emails are “mine,” they are nevertheless unfiltered by theory and uninhibited by anything other than then-existent social mores themselves. The contents of the emails are, to be sure, as raw as any informant’s, and yet the words that I seek to understand are still my own. In this way, my methodology challenges some of the us/them tensions of traditional ethnography, while simultaneously manifesting expanded angles of self-reflexivity.

#### **4. Madawaska speaking**

Some time ago, scrolling through old computer files, I made a marvellous find in the form

of a small anthropological treasure. There on my screen, among the digital miscellany, I discovered a long-forgotten icon that led to an extensive compilation of emails that I had once sent to friends and family. The year was 1996 and I had moved from my home in Georgia to Maine's Madawaska, as I mentioned, the northeastern-most point in the continental United States.

I began to read through the first of the emails. My move to Madawaska was in the days before Facebook and Instagram, before the widespread e-transmission of life's most trivial events, and there were in fact some in my social circle who were not aware of what I was up to, even after I had left Georgia. Smiling, I recalled how I had been looking for some new and remarkable location to move to with the modest amount of money that I had diligently succeeded in saving. To do so I had opened an atlas and, with a fearless curiosity of the Unknown, had for hours traced my fingers all across a giant map of North America. Inspired by Madawaska's apparent remoteness, and upon discovering that the area was traditionally French-speaking, I decided to make the move.

In 1996 I barely even knew what "anthropology" was. But as the contemporary me continued reading those old emails, I realised that what I had uncovered in the emails were archives, textual snapshots taken in real-time ... these were notes from the field, *fieldnotes*, of the simplest yet most unadulterated form. More than correspondence, these were observations of the everyday from a true participant observer. As "fieldnotes" they were certainly clouded by my own personal perspective – a perspective that was riddled with immaturity, frequently privileging humour over ethics. But still, their beauty was that they were written with no agenda: they did not benefit from the structure of theory but more significantly, neither were they limited or even affected by it. This was unedited data which anthropological theory could now, after the fact rather than before it, make sense of in relevant ways.

So with growing interest, I printed out the emails. The stack was fairly thick, there were 136 pages of tight text. And as I read, I kept shaking my head. This really was quite a coincidence, it kept occurring to me. After all, after my time in Finland and Sweden, my PhD later focused on the role of national borders, in that case in regard to issues of sovereignty and nationalism in the Cook Islands, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and Australia. And there I had been, so many years ago, in Madawaska, so close to Canada that the short bridge to Edmundston began at the bottom of my street, just a few hundred metres from my door. Every morning, as I had stepped out of my apartment, I could see more of Canada than I could of the US.

Borders. Nevertheless, Madawaska is hardly a typical border town. Instead, it is more of a regional sub-unit, a fact which at times revealed itself in peculiar ways. As my emails noted:

Just how distinct is the culture here from the rest of Maine? Well, when you enter the state of Maine from the south, there are large, official signs wishing you Welcome To Maine. However, when you enter Maine from the north, that is to say, from Canada, there are no such signs. It is only after you leave this whole area – i.e., exiting Madawaska on US Highway 1 in one direction or Fort Kent in the other – that there are such signs welcoming you to the state!!! (So where on earth does the State Legislature seem to think you’ve been before that??)

On a day-to-day level, however, the most salient manifestations of Madawaska’s positioning involve language, especially the French speech in the area. Indeed, even in regard to English, the effects of the French language were pervasive. Not only did many Madawaska residents speak English with what could be called a “French accent,” but structural aspects of English speech were also impacted:

Or people use French syntax, sort whenever it pleases them: “Yeah, he’s a good guy, him,” this woman at work was saying yesterday. Him? Or this other woman today was talking in the break-room, in a perfect American accent, mind you, and at one point she said, and I quote, “it’s nothing funny when you have frost-bite by your hands.” And this is, of course, when people aren’t mixing actual English with actual French.

In addition to local variations of English, my emailed comments on language frequently focused on the local dialect of French. Indeed, there was so much French in Madawaska. But the younger generations are increasingly choosing English as their first language. As they do so, they are also choosing an Americanness over a Canadianness. Why?

## **5. Existing scholarship does not explain Madawaskans’ language shift**

Central to the myriad territories of the globe today, the concept of nationalism describes how political forces seek to make the nation the “primary form of belonging” (Ignatieff 1993:5). As such, nationalism is the phenomenon by which the boundaries of group identity are pressured (often in the channels of materialist inertia) to expand or contract in order to match the state’s political boundaries (Hobsbawm 2007 [1990]). These same processes have long animated Åland, whose residents “overwhelmingly” refer themselves as *Ålanders*, rather than Finns, Swedish Finns or Finnish Swedes (Joenniemi 2014:87; Tillitsstudie för Åland 2018:68–70).

Sometimes these nationalist pressures are from above, as states seek to consolidate power by eliminating minority views. “Since some forms of cultural and ethnic variation



must be ‘matter out of place’ to nationalists,” writes Eriksen, “ethnic variation is frequently defined by dominant groups as a problem, as something one has to ‘cope with’” (Eriksen 2002:122). Other times, the pressures are from below, as minority groups seek to create new nation-states, that is, to erect nation-state borders around their already-existing group identity, as happened in the fall of the former Yugoslavia. Either way, both the boundaries and the substance of national group identity are frequently contested. Certainly, this has long been the case in Åland (Nihtinen 2017).

The study of nationalism is thus important for at least two reasons. First, examinations of the mechanisms by which national group identity is formed and affected are key to understanding the conflicts described above, whether of the homogenising agendas of states or the state-seeking activism of minority groups. Second, in this age of globalisation, there is no question that borders are in many ways becoming more porous; the form and the function of the nation-state are *changing*. As Åland manages its complex integration into the EU, it is facing these challenges on multiple levels (Suksi 2013:55–56; Hepburn 2014:475–478). Understanding the trends of nationalism that underlie and make up nation-states and autonomous regions alike therefore sheds light on these changes.

The insights of Benedict Anderson here are well-known – even if contested (see e.g. Kelly and Kaplan 2001:22; Chatterjee 2004). Anderson suggests the centrality of print capitalism in creating the cohering force of what he famously terms “imagined communities” (2006 [1983]). According to Anderson, demands for capitalist gain caused early print-makers, for efficiency’s sake, to rely on dialects that were broadly understandable by the largest possible number of people. As a consequence, the speakers of the various sub-dialects of Europe became linked through the newly created common language. They also came, through the group-inflected references that they then read in that language, to “imagine” themselves as part of a single community, one that “is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7). Once bolstered and bounded by political borders, these communities became fortified in the form of nation-states; the citizens of those nation-states, in turn, so strongly took on the identity of their given nation-state that they became willing to die for their newly created country (Calhoun 1993:219; Anderson 2006 [1983]).

With its basis in print capitalism, the driving force of Anderson’s imagined-community theory is materialist, economic. And to be sure, ranging from Wolf’s (1997 [1982]) seminal account of the symbiotic development of the nation-state and globalisation, to Heller’s (2010) genealogical analysis of minority francophone speakers in Canada, the pervasive and at times brutal relationship between political economy and nationalism has been broadly interrogated. No such study, however, has specifically linked evolving nationalist trends, whether in Åland or elsewhere, to the systematisation of corporate global value chains.

Another particular fact about Madawaska is that – unlike Åland – the region has been subject to surprising little contest or conflict since the area was first settled by Europeans in the 1780s. Those first Europeans, known as Acadians, were one of two major branches of land migrants who were fleeing violent British antagonism in nearby Nova Scotia. While this particular group trekked north, the other branch was forced to migrate south, becoming the Cajuns of what is now Louisiana. The term Cajun is in fact simply a variation of the word Acadian (for an in-depth discussion of the term Acadian, see Keppie 2011), marking the two groups' common heritage.

When this northern branch of French-speaking Acadians settled in the broader region surrounding Madawaska, they were a largely homogenous group. And although their settlement from the beginning straddled both sides of the Saint John River, it was split by no political or cartographic boundary because the administrative jurisdiction of the entire area, from a colonial/European perspective, had not yet been definitively established. (Obviously and unfortunately, I myself am reproducing a colonial/European perspective in this article by omitting any discussion of the Native/Indigenous histories of this region, histories which deserve their own attention.)

Uncertainties regarding the colonial administration caused political disputes to arise, not among the local residents, but at a higher level between the governments of the United States and of the pre-Canadian British American Colonies. These disputes, growing in scope and intensity into the 1800s, were larger geo-political conflicts that did not directly stem from or relate to the local settlements along the Saint John River. Still, the resolution of these conflicts came to have a monumental impact on the area. Most significantly, through the Webster–Ashburton Treaty of 1842, the border between the US and the British American Colonies was set straight down the Saint John River, slicing the local Acadian community politically – albeit not yet socially – in two.

In subsequent years, on the side of the river that would later become Canada, French-speaking migrants from Quebec began to arrive. As the numbers of these former Quebecois – now known as *Brayons* – increased, their mass became the predominant cultural group in Edmundston, absorbing many of the Canada-side Acadians. Nevertheless, a large number of descendants of the original Acadian settlers remain in Edmundston, a substantial portion of whom retain ties to their US-side kin, even though the bulk of the social and political affiliation of these Canada-side residents is now solidly Canadian (Wright 2009:100).

On the US side of the border, however, social and political identification has been less stable, as evidenced by the marker of language use. To paint the picture with an overly broad brush, I frequently noticed in Madawaska that in a given family the grandparents spoke French as a first language and (some) English; the parents spoke both French and English but preferred English at home; and the children spoke almost solely English with

maybe (a little) French. More officially, some accounts list 90 percent of the area's US-side residents as now having English as a first language, while 95 percent on the Canadian side are first-language French speakers (Wright 2009:100).

The important question then is *why* this shift is taking place. Indeed, the shift is especially curious given that the town of Madawaska: (1) is traditionally French-speaking; (2) is politically insignificant, that is to say, is not the target of strong political or activist attention; and (3) is not only distant from any English-speaking cultural centre but is also pressed squarely against a French-speaking cultural anchor.

As noted earlier, in the face of these characteristics, the existing scholarly literature fails to offer an adequate answer. This is so for two major reasons.

First, existing theories of nationalism do not explain the choice of Madawaska's residents to identify with the US rather than Canada. After all, most scholarly discussions of nationalism involve disputed territory (e.g. Boldt and Long 1984:546) or contested allegiance (e.g. Ignatieff 1993), either in whole or in part. As Chatterjee points out in a different context, government "always operates on a heterogeneous social field, on multiple population groups, and with multiple strategies" (2004:60). In regard to Madawaska, however, these strategies are usually focused elsewhere; as beautiful as it is, Madawaska is small and insignificant in world politics. Even in the state of Maine, neither Madawaska's potential votes nor its minimal economy have much effect or influence on state politics or state consciousness. Most of the residents of other parts of Maine barely seem to know the region even exists.

Second, theories of media influence do not explain Madawaska. It must be remembered that although Madawaska and Edmundston lie cartographically on opposing sides of national borders, they still parallel each other on either side of the river, like two parts of a zipper between once unified cloth. And to be sure, Edmundston is a French-speaking cultural base, solid not only because of its mass – the city is some four to five times more populous than Madawaska – but also because it is the municipal unit of an official French-speaking part of the province and therefore its French language usage is embedded in, as well as approved by and reproduced by, the state itself.

As a consequence, there is a full French-speaking social network available to the residents of Madawaska – indeed, most Madawaskans have relatives in and around Edmundston, and many even hold dual citizenship (Wright 2009; see also Ong 1999). The anchor of Edmundston thus means that the full panoply of popular media is available in French – radio, television, movies, sports, books, etc. (see generally Eriksen 2002:105). In fact, in a given instance, *more* is likely available in French than English. Following Appadurai, who describes the "emergence of a postnational political world" in the wake of expanding mass media and imagined communities, Madawaskans might be predicted to trend towards the

French language and camaraderie with their relatives in Edmundston. But instead, the opposite is true.

## **6. The centripetal force of economic networks, the centrifugal reach of cultural phonemes**

I return to the underlying question: given that Madawaska lies far from US metropolitan areas and political centres, but adjacent to an anchor of French-speaking language and culture, why is it that the residents of Madawaska, after having spoken French in the region for over two hundred years, are now shifting to English? Since Madawaska lies on the US side of the border, the answer might seem obvious: under the political umbrella of the United States and subjected to the English-language “community” of American media, Madawaskans are simply re-calibrating their own imagined community. But as I have described, such an explanation is incomplete at best and deceptive at worst.

I suggest that the answer here is two-part. The first is based on economics. As might seem obvious, the national border between the US/Madawaska and Canada/Edmundston is indeed an important factor in the severing of US-Madawaskans from the linguistic base of Canada/Edmundston. But the border’s true relevance is due less to its *political* ramifications, and is more so because of the consequences that this political border imposes *economically*. The regulatory function of the border, after all, disrupts and hinders capital flow (e.g. Hardt and Negri 2000:150) in multiple ways that simultaneously encourage Madawaskans to form economic relationships with US entities and discourage them from engaging in such relationships with Canadian businesses.

These economic relationships are of course more than the simple transfer of money. Rather, monetary transfers are necessarily embedded in a peculiar type of social relationship. As such, by entering into economic relationships, the paths mapped by the monetary transfers create conduits of communication that take place through language. Whether the transactions involve purchases, sales, or loans, local Madawaskans thus become linked to networks of English-speakers who manage the transactions from distant locations elsewhere in the US.

This phenomenon is captured by the insight of global value chain analysis. This body of research is driven by a multidisciplinary group of scholars who address what global supply chains have become in the contemporary global political economy. In relevant part, corporate supply chains were originally made up of companies who stood largely in arm’s-length relationships from each other. Today, however, global competition – combined with pressures for social responsibility – have caused significant transformations to the form and function of corporate commerce. Global value chain scholars highlight two important

features of these transformations. First, powerful corporations are today exerting increasing control over their entire supply chains (e.g., Gereffi, Humphrey and Sturgeon 2005; Kaplinsky 2004). Second, and as a consequence of that control, corporate supply chains are becoming ever more integrated systems (e.g., Sobel-Read 2014), even if that integration has yet to be fully recognised socially or regulated legally (Sobel-Read 2020).

In sum, corporate influence is binding together, in novel and unprecedented ways, vast networks of actors; in this manner, corporate power has become increasingly pervasive and invasive, constantly monitoring and even intervening at every level of manufacturing and agriculture, from labour standards to environmental protection, and from corporate boardrooms to family farmers and contract labourers on the factory floor (Gereffi and Fernandez-Stark 2011; Humphrey and Schmitz 2008).

The effects of this systematisation of corporate-driven relationships can be seen in the processes at play in Madawaska and Edmundston. In Madawaska, when I lived there, there were only a few brand-name chain stores, primarily: K-Mart, McDonalds, Subway, Rite Aid, as well as Key Bank. None of these entities is Canadian, instead they are headquartered respectively in Hoffman Estates, Illinois; Oak Brook, Illinois; Milford, Connecticut; Camp Hill, Pennsylvania; and Cleveland, Ohio. (By contrast, there are many well-known Canadian chains in Edmundston, including Canadian Tire and coffee-and-doughnut mecca Tim Hortons.) The money to and from these U.S. branches in Madawaska of course links them directly to their geographically diverse yet all-American corporate headquarters. More importantly, the employees themselves of these branches are linked to far-flung American cities through their day-to-day procurement of the materials necessary to make the branches run, whether the products on K-Mart's shelves or the coffee in McDonald's' cups. Those procurement processes entail economic relationships with myriad suppliers, requiring continual communications with vendors, suppliers, and shipping services throughout the United States.

Equally significant, there are naturally also local businesses in the area. And where ownership and operations are local, the actors in such businesses might be thought to retain financial independence within this narrow French-speaking zone. But banking introduces another important component here, especially in regard to money-lending. As Lenin recognised over 70 years ago, based on the inherent power differential and long duration, the relationship of lender to borrower allows the former to have a significant influence on the latter:

In my opinion it is precisely this that forms the economic basis of imperialist ascendancy. The creditor is more permanently attached to the debtor than the seller is to the buyer. (Lenin, quoting Schulze-Gaevernitz 1939:101)

It is noteworthy that there is only one bank in Madawaska, which, not surprisingly is the one that I used while I lived there: Cleveland-based Key Bank. Given this fact, and even if one factors in the two local credit unions, a significant portion of all financing for local businesses as well as individuals necessarily comes by way of American financial systems outside the region. Home mortgages and small-business loans alike therefore link local Madawaska borrowers to English-speaking financial networks.

Moreover, when interacting with the bank itself, one certainly has the option of speaking French with many of the employees, but as was the case with my own petty savings account – which at one point dipped to \$1.15 – all official documents were in English. So just as one was wooed by glossy English-language brochures, one also bound oneself legally through English-language loan – and account – agreements.

In a related way, credit cards, whether for personal or business use, will primarily be obtained, if not from Key Bank, then through one of the major US credit card suppliers. In addition to official documentation, any communication with the credit card supplier will necessarily be in English; and even if calls are routed to, for example, India, the conversation will still be conducted in a well-contrived cultural simulacrum of Americanness.

A further key economic connection between Madawaska and the English-speaking US comes in the form of purchases and sales between local businesses and English-speaking US customers. For instance, during most of my time in Madawaska, I worked at a frozen-potato processing plant which I'll call Polar Frozen Industries. And I must admit, I worked hard there – including starting at 5am and one time working for thirteen days straight with no day off. Among other things:

These past few days I've been doing some "inspecting" at work. To "inspect" means that hundreds of thousands of little pieces of frozen potatoes pass by in front of you on a conveyor belt, while you stand very close to the opening of a -15 degree (F) freezer, and you have to pick out any of the hundreds of thousands that have the tiniest black spots on them, for example. It's fun for about five minutes. Then your back hurts and your neck hurts and your shoulders hurt and you want to go home.

There are usually 2–4 of us inspectors at any given time. If you're the first one it's not bad, because you know that if you miss a defective piece then one of the other inspectors will probably get it. If you're the LAST one however, you know that if you miss one of the bad ones, then that baby's going into the box, to either be received by some unsuspecting consumer, or to be discovered by some grumpy quality inspector at Campbell's or Pillsbury who's not going to be very happy. What pressure! It's like you're standing there and there's a monster, and you know that if the monster gets past YOU, then it's going to eat your entire village. Well, ok, it's not exactly the same, but I'm sure you can see the amazingly striking similarities.

And all for wages of \$4.40 an hour, later raised to \$4.65 an hour. But significantly, as the above excerpt shows, that \$4.40/\$4.65 an hour was *not* funded by local buyers (and certainly not by French-speaking ones from Edmundston) but instead by purchases from massive American companies – like Campbell’s and Pillsbury, as well as Stouffer’s. These giants incorporated our potatoes into products ranging from canned soup to frozen potato wedges that they sold all around the US. And although expressed through my silly comedy, the above excerpt – showing the fear we had of quality inspections by the likes of Campbell’s and Pillsbury – further gives a sense of the intensity of the social relationships that piggy-backed on the economic ties. This intensity is emblematic of the systematisation of contemporary global value chains: rather than arm’s-length purchases, whereby a buyer simply accepts or rejects the goods as is, here representatives from the corporate buyers were constantly intervening in our performance in a hegemonic, command-and-control style (e.g. Sobel-Read 2020:164–67).

A mock Q&A from another email sheds additional light on the seriousness:

Dear Mr. Potatohead,  
Recently I heard some potato-workers talking about “defects.” I was pretty sure they were talking about me, but before I resorted to violence, I wanted to check with you.  
Defected in Detroit

Dear Defected,  
Why no, you’re not defected. A “defect” in the potato industry refers, among other things, to a rotten piece of potato that gets into boxes of frozen potato-cubes or potato-slices. Many companies are very strict about the number of defects allowed in the products they sell. For example, Stouffers Inc. recently sent a letter to [Polar Frozen Industries, Inc.] where I work and told them that the next time they (ie, Stouffers) receive a load (ie, tens of thousands of pounds) and are doing their quality control on that load, if they find more than TWO defects per twenty-one POUNDS, they will send the ENTIRE shipment back. That would suck, eh?  
Mr. Potatohead.

In other words, the sale of a given product is generally more than the simple exchange of the product for money. Instead, the exchange – especially in continuing or recurrent business contexts – is both embedded in and gives rise to social relationships (see Macaulay 1963). Those social relationships, as here, can certainly entail distinct differences in power. Yet in spite of these differences – or often perhaps because of them – the social relationships influence behaviour, in this case mandating English-language usage while simultaneously tying local Madawaskans to the broader American community.

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Economic ties alone, however, are not enough, to change language use and community allegiance. As Hobsbawm counsels, national affinity must be understood “in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people” (Hobsbawm 1990:10). In regard to Madawaska, the transformations of language and affinity become consummable only because the imagined community of English-speaking America to which the residents are invited is *recognisable*. I suggest that residents of Madawaska have for some time had available to them *two* imagined communities, one of Edmundston and francophone Canada, and the other of English-speaking Maine and the rest of the US. It is quite possible that those dual imaginations have co-existed with little friction and could have continued to do so; my point is that the economic relationships with English-speaking America have tipped the balance – but that is not the whole story.

In ending up with the job at Polar (which was solely because none other was available in the whole area), I was fortunate in that I had an unusual opportunity to interact with individuals from a broad swath of local society. This was because unemployment had recently soared throughout the area, and so individuals from a variety of backgrounds – from loggers, to accountants, to grocery-store clerks – were forced to work there.

One of the things that surprises me most about my time there is how generally seamlessly I was able to interact with this range of local residents, in spite of differences of (geographical) background, language and dialect. As I hinted at above, those linguistic differences, indeed, were more common than one might have guessed. For example:

Unfortunately, before I can start working whole-heartedly on my French, I have to learn how to understand these people when they speak ... English! I mean, sometimes people will repeat something to me like three times, and finally I just have to say something like: “Could you please say the exact same sentence that you’re saying now, but using different words?”

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I’ve written before about some of the communication problems which have taken place between the locals and me. Well, not much has changed in that department. The other morning a new guy came into the break-room.

“Does anyone know what time Mike the foreman gets here?” he asked the group of us.

“He usually emerges about now,” I answered politely.

“Where the fuck’s that?” the new guy answered.

“He should be here soon,” I said.

But through – or sometimes around – spoken language, we usually seemed to understand each other in terms of a shared cultural grammar. Salient here are theories of cultural-resource tool boxes: in evaluating cultural practices, Shearing and Ericson (1991) have



concluded that members of a group possess a certain, limited number of practices available to fit any given situation. For example, when greeting another person, one culture might allow hand-shaking where another might require a cheek kiss.

The point is that I, as a sample representative of mainstream America, usually shared that cultural tool box with the local residents. This mutual understanding often manifested itself in the most everyday of circumstances, however silly:

The most satisfying part of working lately has been that a number of my earlier acquaintances have now become friends, and trust me, when things get slow, we have ourselves a grand ol' time! You really have to in order to survive. We laugh and joke and make faces, and of course, we throw potato-pieces at each other. What more could you ask for? (Except maybe that it hurt a little less when you got pegged with a frozen chunk of potato!) Even the ex-nun of 17 years has been known to throw a potato or two at me to keep us in good spirits.

Although seemingly trivial, I would argue instead that essential components of mutual cultural intelligibility shine through in these sorts of articulations of the mundane. Indeed, in the childishness, in the bored utterances of juvenile humour that made the days passable, we communed:

I work with several people who are prime examples of people who should NEVER be given spare time. For example, the line was down for a little while this afternoon, and the foremen were elsewhere in the building trying to fix the problem. While we waited, this was what took place in my vicinity:

- two people were sprinting around trying to stick pieces of tape to each other's backs;
- one person was pretending to sneeze and then flicking little pieces of potato onto the floor;
- one person was busy drawing happy-faces and polka dots on the tape in the tape machine, so that when we would later run boxes through it, the boxes would come out taped with happy-faces and polka dots.

There were many more examples. My point here is that these various comments, jokes, and actions were not only shared but *shareable*. They were tools from a cultural tool box to which we all – they as locals, and I as a transplant from mainstream America – had access to. Even more accurately, I would say that these actions and articulations of culturally-specific humour are in essence cultural *phonemes*.

A phoneme, in linguistic terms, refers to the set of varying ways that individual speakers or groups articulate a specific sound, such that – because of the structural opposition that differentiates them from “other” sounds – the variations are perceived by all the members

of the group to be “one sound.” For example, the ‘ou’ of “house” is characteristically different when spoken by many Canadians as compared with many Americans. And yet, that ‘ou’ is still within the relevant phoneme, it continues to fall within the acceptable range of comprehension for speakers of both Canadian and American English: there is no compromise to the *meaning* or understandability. The same is true as among individual language-speakers – our pronunciation of each sound is inevitably and irreparably *slightly* different based on our pitch, tone, etc., and yet, language functions without interruption.

A similar phenomenon occurs, I suggest, in regard to culture. In other words, our actions might vary slightly, not only the sounds of our words but also the *substance* of our sentences might differ in tenor, but we nevertheless recognise each other’s *meanings*. (In the structural opposition of semiotics, a kiss on the cheek is a friendly greeting in part precisely because it is not a kiss on the lips.) And on these meanings, we build social relationships. Anderson (2006 [1983]) discusses phonemic variation in regard to the dialects that were bridged through the languages driven by print capitalism; his *imagined communities* assume a similar phonemic role for culture, though he never breaks down his analysis to that level.

Here, I rely on such a micro-level of analysis to make a more general claim. This claim is that American culture is not unfamiliar to the residents of Madawaska; more importantly, American culture is not a foreign phenomenon that Madawaskans simply recognise, instead it has become a culture in which phonemically and semiotically they recognise *themselves* (see Althusser 1970). It is worth stressing that what is at issue here is not a media-and-pop-culture story. Certainly, many people around the world are “familiar” with American culture through the seemingly endless proliferation of television, film and music, among others. But the question for Madawaskans is not about superficial awareness but rather about the lived experience that makes American culture comfortable enough for them to see themselves within it.

Highlighting the relevant underlying structural opposition, Eriksen discusses ways that “[g]roup identities must always be defined in relation to that which they are not – in other words, in relation to non-members of the group” (Eriksen 2002:10). As such, he describes the impassioned drive among the Breton minority in France to speak Breton: “[t]he militancy concerning language can therefore be seen as an anti-French political strategy” (Eriksen 2002:109). Here, however, a contrary process is in play. Rather than entrenching their local group identity in *opposition* to mainstream American culture, the culture of local Madawaskans is becoming phonemically synonymous with that larger culture.

As such, when Madawaskans’ economic relationships with US corporations/global value chains carry with them social relationships, as they necessarily must, Madawaskans enter them not via translated terms but through shared phonemes, not across communities but within one. The process is cyclical, ever-aggrandising. Even though the national

border that separates Madawaska from Edmundston freely allows the exchange of cultural resources, it still restricts capital flow. This political border thus forces local residents, for *financial* reasons, to engage in economic relationships with American rather than [French-speaking] Canadian business partners. In the conduits of those economic relationships – relationships which are ever increasingly being mandated, constricted and enforced through the systematisation of global value chain business – residents of Madawaska simultaneously develop social relationships, which, as noted, are always already (Althusser 1970) comfortable. And in that comfort, the local language becomes slowly untied from its local moorings, dislodged from historical context; the siren’s call of the English language and American identity grows all the louder and an imagined community shifts to a US farther south.

## 7. From Madawaska to Åland

Åland, there is no doubt, lies far from Madawaska, geographically and culturally. But the comparison deserves attention. As noted, support for the Swedish language in Åland has of course benefitted from the islands’ proximity to Sweden. The Swedish state has provided, within easy reach, a linguistic anchor for media, sport and business, among others. And indeed, the hold of the Swedish language in Åland remains strong:

The territorial autonomy of the Åland Islands should be seen as a compromise of Finnish sovereignty. In terms of protecting the Swedish language and culture on the Åland Islands, the settlement seems to have succeeded in resisting a “Finnishization” of the Islands for almost 100 years now. Indeed, the proportion of inhabitants in the Islands who have registered Finnish as their mother tongue has remained largely steady over the course of a century. (Öst 2016:231)

But institutional arrangements that have made this achievement possible to date do not necessarily guarantee long-term success. As Suksi points out, the ongoing vitality of Åland’s autonomy has depended on “an element of constant negotiation and co-operation that aims at defining and re-defining the parameters of and interface between the two spheres of government [Åland and Finland]” (Suksi 2013:52).

In other words, the success of the Swedish language in Åland is not solely due to the institutional relationship itself as between the territory Åland and the Finnish metropole. Instead, the success is thanks to the flexibility that that institutional relationship has generated. So far, this flexibility has helped Åland to surmount a century of challenges. But the flexibility likewise leaves Åland open to challenges.

In the background, as discussed above, the nature of global commerce is changing. Historically, purchases and sales were largely made at arms-length, and thus, such transactions may have had little effect on Åland. But through global value chains, as well as other means, once independent firms are becoming more thoroughly integrated: who Ålanders do business with now *matters* more than ever before.

Like Madawaska toward francophone Canada across the river, Ålanders can easily look across the near waters to Sweden for many of their needs, both linguistic and business-oriented. But Finland remains a tempting target for business – and why not? Even with the otherwise open borders of the EU, Finland continues to be the “domestic” market. This *domestic-ness* is indeed partly structured – if not intensified – economically by the specific contours of Åland’s special arrangement with the EU (e.g. Silverström 2008:268). Based on this arrangement, a tax border exists between Åland and other EU member states, including Sweden, bringing without a doubt some local benefits for Åland but also serving as a small barrier to commerce outside Finland. According to one politician on Åland, quite simply, “[t]he tax border makes it easier to do business with Finland.” (Östling 2020(2), quoting Nina Fellman).

In regard to cross-border trade it should be noted that the prevalence of the English language in Ålanders’ transnational commerce, whether with mainland Finland or beyond, does not change these observations. The reason, as discussed above, is that outside language use on its own is not enough to bring about significant transformations (just as inner-group language use, on its own, is often insufficient to maintain that language against erosion from the outside). Instead, as with Madawaska, what is important is the full set of factors that influence a given group. I am suggesting here, in regard to Åland, that perhaps to date, and given ongoing changes in the world, that full set has not been properly accounted for.

Further, tourism from mainland Finland remains an important source of income for Åland. As such, employers in many industries in Åland have increasingly begun preferring employees who are competent in Finnish as well as Swedish (H. Jansson 2007:26). As a result, in spite of the strong quantitative figures seeming to demonstrate the dominance of Swedish, “bilingualism is thus expanding” (Östling 2020(2) [translation mine]) and a subtle layer of Finnish is clearly already there, potentially pushing toward the surface.

But obviously, skills in Finnish alone are not enough to cause shifts like the ones that have taken place in Madawaska. The question then is whether Finnish and Swedish/Åland’s cultures are sufficiently similar so as to allow, or even to facilitate, a corresponding slippage of imagined community as I have described regarding Madawaskans. For sure, Ålanders and Finns alike would argue vehemently against any such overlap. But I am not so certain, and some research suggests at least a reasonably strong sense of affiliation by Ålanders for Finland (Tillitsstudie för Åland 2018:68–70). Indeed, I suspect that some fifty years ago

French-speaking Madawaskans might have held similarly strong sentiments about their differences from English-speaking mainstream Americans.

In regard to Åland, although perhaps contested, Harry Jansson has argued that the growing preference noted above of local employers seeking to hire Swedish-Finnish bilingual employees “is leading to noticeable changes in the population structure of Åland” (2007:26 [translation mine]). So the point is that regardless of recognised sentiments one way or the other, it is now beyond question that these overall shifts in global commerce are definitely occurring, with effects in Åland. It is possible that, as in Madawaska, these effects are at least beginning to impact local understandings of self among Ålanders as well.

Perhaps even more significantly, there is now an additional process at play: the COVID-19 pandemic. In the unfolding flow of this pandemic, two factors have in emotional terms – and therefore potentially in regard to imagined communities – arguably pushed Åland closer to Finland. First, the national border closures that took place at the beginning of 2020 of course largely severed Åland from Sweden, physically at least. On its own, this may not have had much of a long-term effect. But second, Sweden took a drastically different approach to the pandemic than did Finland. In short, Finland managed to subdue the virus whereas Sweden did not (and in many regards did not try) (e.g. Goodman 2020).

Åland was for much of the pandemic spared from the most serious effects of the virus, in part because of regulation by the Finnish state. Ålanders thus succeeded for so long against the virus as *Finns*. And because of the border closures, it was for some time predominantly only Finns who were visiting Åland (because this was as close to “international travel” as they could get) (Ålandstidningen 2020), replacing the usual hordes of Swedes. The relationship between Åland and Finland grows closer.

At the same time, as of the writing of an earlier draft of this article, the border with Sweden was just beginning to re-open. Although the economic boost that Swedes could bring with them was welcome in Åland, there was a real fear about Swedes importing the virus into these island communities that had otherwise fared so well (Östling 2020(1); Ålandstidningen 2020). There was, then, a novel element of “us” and “them” that imposed itself in the historically strong Åland-Sweden relationship. It remains to be seen whether this wedge will be temporary or permanent – but it was created, and could indeed grow and have longer-term consequences.

Linking back to Madawaska, there are for sure critical differences between Åland and Madawaska, and I do not mean to shy away from these. Geographically, the location of Åland on the maritime highway between Sweden and Finland, as compared with Madawaska’s spectacular remoteness, generates distinct dynamics and possibilities. Among other things, Åland is not only impacted by the cultural vibrations of tourist flows but also is

a much more convenient launching and landing pad for immigration and emigration (e.g. ÅSUB: Statistics and Research Åland), with corresponding ripples to the local imagined community.

Most interesting in regard to differences, from my own perspective, is the fact that Åland maintains control over the series of legal levers that regulate its form of sovereignty more generally and its control over language and culture more specifically. In this way, Åland as a political territory has the ability to make choices about its cultural composition that are entirely unavailable to Madawaskans. I have written elsewhere that sovereignty is neither a thing nor an idea but rather a mechanism by which a group is able to regulate its relationships with others; that regulation, however, always entails compromises because of competing economic and cultural demands (Sobel-Read 2016). In Åland, for example, restrictions on the rights of foreign/non-Swedish-speakers to purchase land and open businesses definitely strengthens the standing of the Swedish language. But these rules have the corresponding effect of depressing land values and raising shop prices, such that, as Gunnar Jansson has written, it can be said that landowners and consumers pay the price for these cultural and linguistic protections (2007: 133–34). Whether, then, these prices and protections make up the right balance for Åland is naturally the subject of much debate, and indeed, there are of course competing interests in regard to the correct calibration of all of these regulation-managed compromises.

## 7. Conclusion

The fact remains that the relationship between Åland and Finland has provided a political and institutional structure through which Åland has been able to maintain strong laws that protect its minority Swedish language. After over a hundred years of fears of “Finnishisation”, Ålanders have retained an impressive degree of autonomy. The vibrancy of Åland’s specifically Swedish-language protections have not even been dampened by the demands of the European Union, although this membership by both necessity and design requires the transfer of competencies from all member territories and therefore has reduced at least some of the overall authority of the Åland government.

For Ålanders then, in the jurisdictional space of their islands, there is every reason to be optimistic. But beneath the surface, global economic shifts continue to take place, and with them, changing conditions and relationships, all of which are affected – or have been exacerbated – by the COVID-19 pandemic. And so throughout, Madawaska stands as a cautionary tale. Madawaska may be located at a considerable distance from Åland, geographically, legally, politically and culturally – but nevertheless, in this world of globalisation, the transformative linguistic events that have unfolded there are, in the end,

perhaps not so far-fetched.

As I noted early on in this article, my goal in the preceding pages has not been to *resolve* the challenges that Åland currently faces in regard to its unique Swedish language and culture. That said, I personally take these challenges seriously, not as theoretical curiosities but as real issues with impacts on real people. And based on the literature and on my own conversations with Ålanders on the subject, I remain convinced that the dynamics of the situation have not yet been fully recognised or mapped. This means that any resolutions that do exist may be more difficult to discover.

My intent here is therefore to open novel avenues of conversation – avenues, which, with some luck, will lead to previously hidden insight along with new pathways of research, all of which will hopefully help to support more vibrant policy choices not only in Åland but also from metropole Finland. To that end, it would be valuable to see future research especially in regard to the cross-border commerce that Ålanders partake in. Here I think the most interesting aspect relates not to quantitative figures but rather to investigating *who* Ålanders are choosing to do business with, *why* they are making those particular choices, *how* the relationships are structured and play out (including language use) and *what* the consequences are in terms of both relationship-building and subsequent commercial opportunities. Similarly, it would be interesting to build on existing studies regarding Ålanders' perceptions of themselves (e.g., Tillitsstudie för Åland 2018) to provide more detailed and nuanced information about those perceptions. With more [qualitative] data in these areas, the results could be combined with the existing literatures on legal competencies and language use, among others, to provide a more robust platform for future engagement and Swedish-language protection for Åland, with corresponding lessons for other smaller territories and states around the globe.

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## Call for Papers

### *Special issue I 2023:*

#### ***Territorial autonomies in an era of great power competition: battlegrounds or actors?***

The transformations of international relations in recent years have put territories with autonomous status back in the forefront of global politics. The best-known cases of today are those that concern great powers and their respective rivalries. For example, the controversies over China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Province have put pressure on many countries to revise their relations with Beijing, the Russian annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea has been regarded as the catalyst of a new cold war and even Donald Trump's proposal to buy Greenland from Denmark was a tense moment in the relationship between the European Union and the United States. The new era of tensions and strategic competition between China, Russia and the United States has demanded states all throughout the world to recalibrate their assumptions. Is the situation similar for territorial autonomies?

Territorial autonomies have a scope for decision-making in international relations, one that has been analysed in frameworks such as paradiplomacy, federal relations and continental integration. However, the attempts to understand the role and place of territorial autonomies in great power rivalries have been sparse, with many fundamental questions left unanswered. Are territorial autonomies only an object of great power competition? Or do they have ways to assert their preferences and navigate these international rivalries? Are territorial autonomies subject to similar pressures to cope with great power rivalry as the states they are constituents of? Or does their autonomous status offer them room to trace their own approaches?

This new edition of JASS calls for scholars to contribute with original full-length research articles that investigate the place of territorial autonomies in great power competition. We are particularly interested in manuscripts that conceptualise and theorise the agency of territorial autonomies in the context of great power rivalry, 'Exit from Hegemony' (Cooley & Hethershaw 2020) and other recent analyses of international politics. We are also interested in theoretically-informed and empirically-rich descriptions of how territorial autonomies cope with great power rivalries. The ultimate goal of this special issue is to evince the importance of territories with autonomous status in the 'big', structuring state rivalries of today.

**Deadline for submissions to this issue is February 1st, 2022.** JASS welcomes both articles and research notes and does not charge APCs or submission charges. It is an Open access journal and applies a Creative Commons license. Articles should preferably not include more than 12 000 words (excluding references).

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