

## **The EU and Democratic Leverage: Are there still Lessons to be learnt from the Spanish Transition to Democracy?**

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**Abstract:** The issue of conditionality and how the EU should seek to influence positive transformations in its periphery is as relevant today as it was in the early 1990s. There are some important lessons that can still be learned from the Spanish transition to democracy in this respect. By combining strict conditionality with its 'normative power', the European Community managed to shape – if not make (Fishman 2003) – the Spanish transition to democracy. The consensus surrounding European integration worked as a unifying factor amongst all of the elite groups by giving them a common goal. This broad consensus ensured that no elite group could act in the sort of irresponsible way that could jeopardise the democratisation process and, by inference, the integration of Spain with the Community. At the same time, the EC worked as a sort of moderating force. Neither of these positive effects would have occurred had the EC not used its leverage potential and remained firm in its stance of conditioning accession to Spain taking clear steps toward democratisation.

**Keywords:** Spanish transition; democratic conditionality; EU leverage; linkage and leverage.

During the second half of the 1970s and 1980s the Spanish transition captured the imagination of Europe and the world. The core European countries were eager for the Spanish democratisation to succeed; unlike Portugal or Greece, Spain was a middle-sized country (c. 35 million inhabitants to Greece and Portugal's 9 million in 1975) whose integration into Europe could bring great rewards (albeit similarly great challenges). Moreover, the Spanish transition gave the Community a common external 'purpose' at a time when it was lacking impetus. Spain – along with Portugal – has been widely regarded as Europe's very first contribution to democracy promotion (Dimitrova and Pridham 2004, p. 95), and as an example for post-communist countries that in the late 1990s were trying to overcome their authoritarian past by securing accession to the EU (Pastor 2003). During the final days of the Franco regime, frustrated with the absence of convincing reforms by President Arias Navarro, the EC coordinated a fierce wave of hostilities against the dictatorship. France and Germany were, at the time, particularly vociferous in their condemnation of the regime and their support for the opposition (Crespo MacLennan 2004, pp. 149-151); the German social democrats, the Eurocommunist groups and the Socialist International were particularly active in supporting the

opposition to the Franco regime (*ibid* p. 178). Even in Britain, despite ‘limited recognition’, condemnation to the regime – amplified by the question of Gibraltar – was widespread (Portero 1999, pp. 224-226). The United States, on the other hand, remained oddly detached from the situation and seemed not to offer either support for the regime nor the opposition forces. Considering the active role taken by the European Community – declaring in a communiqué that the new Southern European applications had ‘entrusted the EC a political responsibility that it could not avoid without denying its very foundational pacts’ – and the importance the process of European integration had for Spain’s consolidation of democracy, it is easy to understand why the view that European integration was the ‘principal catalyst for democratisation in Spain’ (Closa and Haywood 2004, pp. 16-17) became popular.

It now appears, though, that the Spanish ‘model’ of democratic transition through consensus (Alonso and Muro 2011; Colomer 1995; Edles 1998, pp. 6; Gunther 1992; Haywood 2005, p. 39; Linz and Stepan 1996) may have contributed to the new democratic institutions suffering from the legacy of authoritarianism. Much has been written recently about how Spain’s current troubles directly relate to the way the transition to democracy was achieved. The view that Spain is something of a ‘frozen democracy’ – where regeneration of elites and institutional reform is particularly hard to achieve – challenges the common assumption that the Spanish transition was nothing else than a resounding success (Field 2011, p.2; Hagopian 1990; Magone 2009, p. 430). As put by McDonough *et al.*, the ‘viability of Spanish democracy’ may have been achieved ‘at some cost to its quality’ (1998, p. 1). On top of this, as events within the EU (e.g. the democratic crises in Greece and Hungary) and its immediate vicinity (with the initial furore surrounding the Arab Spring being replaced by pessimism) rapidly unfold, the EU’s potential as a democratising agent once again jumps to the fore. It is with such developments in mind that a revision of the role Europe played in the democratisation of Spain can be particularly enlightening. Many parallels can be drawn between the influence the EC had as a ‘facilitator of democratic establishment’ (Closa and Heywood 2004 p. 17) in Spain and the role it can play in the democratisation of its periphery. This paper will analyse how the process of European integration supported the consolidation of democracy in Spain at a non-institutional level by looking at its influence on the elite’s behaviour and calculations. Indeed, it was this sort of non-institutional influence, which is not solely related to the *acquis communautaire* and a narrow understanding of Europeanisation, which greatly explains how the EC and its member states shaped Spain’s democratisation process. There are, perhaps, still lessons to be learned from the Spanish experience. In order to understand how a democratic ‘pull’ – characterised by a non-institutionalised or an extra-institutional dimension – influenced the Spanish transition at elite level this paper will first present a short description of

how international considerations can shape democratic outcomes by influencing elite behaviour, followed by an analysis of how Europe's influence shaped the preferences of the political elites during the Spanish democratisation process.

### **Europe as a democratic influence**

Although a key aspect today, Spain's path to democracy was not directly influenced by the formal and explicit democratic demands now evident in the chronology of European Treaties. Europe's positive influence (for the most part) on Spanish democratisation was far more informal. The pressures of Europeanisation – understood as the institutional demands towards convergence and adaptation – were less comprehensive in the 1980s, and even less so in the 1970s. Indeed, before the SEA came into effect the Community the Treaty of Rome founded in 1957 was arguably 'still little more than a customs union, supplemented by an expensive and wasteful agricultural policy' (Stirk 1996 p. 208), and terms like 'Eurosclerosis' and 'Europessimism' were commonly used to describe Europe's 'dismal state' during the 1970s (Griffiths 2006 p. 187). On the political front the Community seemed unable to 'develop a defence profile, or even to consolidate a common foreign policy' (Stirk 1996, p. 208). Similarly, the Council of Europe had no supranational power (Messenger 2006, p. 40) and had the 'minimalist mandate' – mainly due to British reservations (*ibid*; Dinan 2006, pp. 300-301) – to 'promote European unity by debate, publicity and research' (Davies 1996 p. 1083). The pessimism was such that *The Economist* even decided to close its Brussels office in 1982 and the cover of its 20th March issue of the same year mischievously announced the death of the EC (Ludlow 2006, p. 222). Greater political integration was not actively pursued until the late 1980s and early 1990s when, under the leadership of Jacques Delors, the Maastricht Treaty and the wider process of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) were set in motion. It was this Europe, the Europe of 'Eurosclerosis' and 'Europessimism' that Spain applied to join in July 1977.

Bearing in mind this 'dismal' state of affairs in which the EC found itself in the 1970s – a situation not entirely dissimilar to the recent 'confidence crisis' in the EU (*The Telegraph* 2012) – any analysis of the influence Europe may have had in the democratisation of Spain needs to focus more on non-institutional and indirect pressures, rather than on direct and coordinated policies. The way international factors interacted with domestic developments during the Spanish transition was very different to the way this interaction shaped the transitions of post-communist countries. Whilst the EU actively and explicitly encouraged the democratisation of post-communist Europe before considering accession – established in the

Copenhagen Criteria – the EC’s role during the Spanish transition was far less structured, uniform and explicit. The model (if we can call it that) of ‘democratisation through integration’ that has characterised the EU’s approach to enlargement since the 1990s (Dimitrova and Pridham 2004) cannot be adequately used to explain the interaction between the EC (or its members) and Spain during its democratisation. Although the EU’s positive reinforcement of domestic changes towards good governance in Central and Eastern Europe (Börzel and Van Hüllen 2011) was similar to the way in which the EC influenced positive changes in Spain (i.e. through the use of conditionality), the way conditionality was used as well as the objective of the policies implemented was rather different. The use of conditionality was different in the Spanish case mainly for two reasons. (1) Although it was ‘positive’ in the sense that the prospect of integration (i.e. ‘the golden carrot’) was probably a credible option – without which European democracy promotion has been considerably less effective (Börzel and Risse 2012, p.203) – conditionality was primarily ‘negative’ since rejecting approaches by Franco’s Spain to open accession negotiations with the EC was used as a punitive measure. The EC never openly offered accession conditioned on democratisation, but rather punished the Franco regime with ostracism because of its lack of democracy. In some ways, then, we could also compare the use of conditionality in the Spanish case with the way the EU uses ‘negative conditionality’ when dealing with its periphery – an approach that seems to have been far less successful (Brummer 2009; Smith 2005, p. 75). What is more (2), the EU’s current approach to conditionality is geared towards reinforcing positive developments in the consolidation of ‘good governance’ by supporting ‘desirable features’ such as ‘participation, accountability, inclusion and transparency’ (Carothers and de Gramont 2013, pp. 90-91). In the Spanish case there was no coordinated attempt to develop this sort of ‘desirable features’ from below but rather a general commitment to see a democratic Spain and an implicit conditionality that was often used as negative rather than positive reinforcement.

At the same time, although claims that European integration was the ‘principal catalyst’ for the Spanish transition do seem to overstate its importance, it is rather clear that at the very least the EC shaped, if not ‘made’, the Spanish transition (Fishman 2003). In the Spanish case, a specific project of internationalisation (regional integration) exponentially raised its linkage to European democracies – as well as invariably raising its sensitivity to leverage from these democracies (Levitsky and Way 2005; 2010) – as well as contributing towards the development of a democratic ‘consciousness’ at a social level. What is peculiar about the way in which Europe ‘shaped’ the Spanish transition is that it was initially non-institutional and not solely related to socioeconomic development (i.e. modernisation theory). The efforts made by the EC and its member states to support democracy in Spain were different in terms of the objective as

well as the execution. As such, there are still relevant lessons to be learned from the way Europe shaped the Spanish democratisation process. Particularly considering the current situation in the EU and in its periphery.

### **Leverage, conditionality and the elites**

Although the democratisation literature addresses the issue more broadly now, the difficulties of analysing the role the international context plays in transitions to democracy remains problematic. Levitsky and Way's (2005 and 2010) approach to linkage and leverage in transitions to democracy has presented a novel way of dealing with this issue, particularly at elite level. In the theoretical model they develop, linkage refers to the internationalisation of domestic actors (NGOs, businesses, technocrats, universities, trade unions, etcetera), whilst leverage refers simply to the power and/or direct influence a certain democracy or external democratic actor may have over an authoritarian regime via the provision/deprivation of certain goods (aid, logistical support or even public backing) (Levitsky and Way 2005 p. 22). Following this interpretation, in the Spanish case international linkage should be understood as the structural/macro-social changes that occurred as a result of a closer interaction with democratic regimes, and linkage should be understood as the specific instances in which elite behaviour and/or choices were directly influenced by pressure and/or actions from democratic actors abroad. For example, it could be said that the moderation shown by trade unions during the transition to democracy was a result of both linkage and leverage. Despite being the most important social actor during the transition trade unions – they may not have been as numerous or powerful as other European labour organisations but they were far better organised than other civil organisations in Spain, including the Spanish employers' association (Bermeo and García-Durán 1994 p. 101) – showed a great amount of restraint during the transition years.

On the one hand, it could be argued that linkage to other European countries contributed towards the demobilisation of society as social pacts (Grenelle Agreements in France or the Social Contract in the UK) had become common practice in Europe in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which almost certainly influenced the general attitude towards social pacts amongst the Spanish trade unions. Similarly, the consensus on European integration was so overwhelming that, much as the PSOE was forced to adjust its economic policy due to the constraints of European integration, the trade unions had very little choice but to moderate their stance; the popular support for integration was such that they could not be perceived as being the new stumbling block to achieving this 'common goal' following the end of the dictatorship (Hamann 2003 pp. 56-61). On the other hand, actions by individual European actors also

contributed to the demobilisation of civil society, and should be perceived as conscious attempts to shape the outcome of the transition process in Spain. Willy Brandt and Olof Palme's personal endorsements of Felipe González – followed by logistical and financial support by the SPD and the Swedish Social Democrats to the PSEO (Ortega Ortiz 2008 pp. 125-135; *Blanco y Negro*, 26/4/1975; *Europa Press*, 23/12/1975) – or the influence prominent Eurocommunist leaders such as George Marchais in France or Enrico Berlinguer in Italy (Edles 1998 p. 57) had on Santiago Carrillo's decision to steer the PCE away from *ruptura* in favour of reform are clear examples of European actors using their leverage potential at elite level. Both the PCE and the PSOE needed the endorsement of European actors in an attempt to convince Spanish voters they were ready to govern; this support, however, was conditioned on a commitment to show restraint.

It could be argued that the support offered by European actors to specific individuals (Felipe González in particular) may have had negative long-lasting consequences for Spain's democracy. The huge amount of legitimacy that European support gave to individual leaders arguably contributed towards consolidating their impressive staying power (González, for instance, remains a powerful figure in the PSOE (*El País* 14/7/2014; 26/7/2014)), and thus contributed towards 'stifling competition by concentrating power in the hands of a few elite actors', a common 'negative side-effect' of frozen democracies (Encarnación 2008, p. 43). Regardless of how wise this support was, the fact remains that, although in Levitsky and Way's model linkage is more important than leverage, in the Spanish case European leverage – understood broadly as the influence European actors had on domestic elites – was just as relevant for the Spanish democratisation process as linkage. The Spanish transition unfolded in an international context in which leverage was consistently applied; accession into the Common Market was an incentive to democratise and a source of resources for the democratic forces in Spain to utilise, whilst actors throughout Europe – without there being anything resembling a coordinate policy at EC level – helped shape the preferences and strategies of domestic elites during the transition.

Having said this though, unlike institutions or civil society groups, elites are not always easy to define, identify or categorise. This is particularly so during transitions to democracy, which are periods characterised by high levels of uncertainty (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986 p. 4). For theorists of elitism, for instance, the elites are the 'people who are able, through their position in a powerful organisation, to affect national political outcomes individually, regularly and seriously' (Burton and Higley, 1987: 296). A 'classical' approach to elitism conceptualises the elite as a self-conscious and also self-serving group that is relatively easy to identify; 'elite

variability' is independent of other social, economic or cultural forces (*ibid*), and as such elites will communicate, act and think differently. The problem is, however, that if we understand a national elite as a group of individuals who are 'capable, if they wish it, of making substantial political trouble for high officials' whilst avoiding being 'promptly repressed' (Field and Higley 1973; in Burton and Higley 1987 p. 5), we are utilising a very broad conceptualisation; perhaps too broad. Repression, for once, is not always predictable; it depends as much on structural limitations (international context, domestic balance of power, size of the threat, perception of the threat) as it does on individual decisions and preferences. A detailed analysis of who, when or what group could be seriously considered to be part of the elite during the Spanish transition is beyond the scope of this essay. Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, the concept of 'elite(s)' will be understood in its narrower sense, i.e. those high-ranking officials within the regime, as well as the leaders of the main opposition forces (political parties). I will therefore not focus on social movement leaders or the broader 'business class' simply because their classification as part of the negotiating elites is far from undisputed.

Leaving aside the issue of definition and identification, elite theorists and supporters of 'pacted transitions' have long claimed that democratisation is a process that is invariably initiated and conducted by the elite(s). After all, if 'a regime change is precisely a change of the rules of the game' then, logically, 'the game for changing the rules cannot entirely be shaped by the incentives structured by the rules being changed' (Colomer 1995, p. 6). In other words, if all actors were entirely constrained by structural restraints change would simply not occur. This 'elite-driven' theory of democratisation has clearly dominated the analysis of the Spanish transition. Authors such as Josep Colomer (1991 and 1995) – borrowing elements from Przeworski's (1986, pp. 50-56) theoretical framework and using O'Donnell's distinction between 'hard-liners' and 'soft liners' (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, pp. 15-16) – Nicos Poulantzas, (1976) and Otto Holman (1995) have all presented analyses of the Spanish transition that are based mostly on elite calculations and actions.

However, alternative interpretations of the Spanish transition, that question both the success of the process and the centrality of the elites, have emerged. The view that elite theory, by simply highlighting individual agency, does not convincingly 'correct "deterministic" structural paradigms' (Edles 1995, pp. 355-356) has inspired a new literature on the Spanish transition. This new literature is informed by alternative views on democratisation theory. Modernisation and culturalist scholars (Edles 1995, p. 370; Inglehart and Welzel 2005, p. 70), for instance, question the premises that elites act independently from society or that they possess a different

political culture to the rest of society (Eckstein 1998, p. 792). At the same time, the idea that the transition occurred in some sort of an elite-level 'vacuum' where political leaders were free to engage in bargaining due to a lack of social mobilisation, has also been questioned. The changes introduced by the regime in the economic sphere, it has been argued, opened opportunities for some social issues to emerge (mainly trade disputes and strikes) in some of the main industrial centres in Spain (Balfour 1989, pp. 142-143; Martín García 2010, pp. 51; Sartorius and Sabio 2007, pp. 51-53).

The strikes and labour mobilisations in turn opened opportunities for other social forces to join in the cycle of contestation in the very early years of the democratisation process (from 1974 until 1977); students, the clergy and different nationalist groups also started to mobilise against the dictatorship. This broader mobilisation was initially repressed by the police forces, which only helped to deteriorate the image of the dictatorship outside Spain even further (Martín García 2010, pp. 52-53). This in turn opened more windows of opportunity for the opposition forces to mobilise. In a first instance, the labour and student movements that dominated the social landscape during the Arias Navarro and the first Suárez governments were characterised by a radical and *rupturista* stance, which both drove and set the boundaries for the democratic process (Soto 2005, pp. 447-448). In many ways, then, the social movements during the early stages of the transition that were characterised by a 'brief but intense cycle of protest influenced short-term political events and even shaped some of the longer-term characteristics of political culture in contemporary Spain' (Sánchez León 2011, p. 95). This interpretation of the Spanish transition 'from below' certainly seems to challenge the view that the transition was as a controlled and planned process carried out by the political elites. The high levels of mobilisation between 1974 and 1977 seem to suggest that, at least at the very beginning, there was no clear plan or programme that was being followed but that key decisions were taken on the go, shaped in great measure by social mobilisations (Quirosa-Cheyrouze y Muñoz 2007, pp. 17-19).

There are, therefore, good reasons for doubting that elite actions (and the institutional arrangements that result from these actions) are at the fore of a causal correlation with democratisation. There are also good reasons to question the premise that the Spanish transition was 'pacted' from above in an atmosphere of complete calm characterised by an almost absolute lack of social engagement. However, any analysis of a democratisation process has to acknowledge that adept leadership can, at the very least, smooth the transition from authoritarianism to democracy. This is of course not the same as saying that elite pacts can, by

virtue of their own importance, sustain democracy, but ignoring the role of leadership can be equally misguided.

Historical Institutionalism and other similar theories of ‘structured contingency’ (Bejarano 2011) already explain how institutional evolution places certain structural limitations on elite bargaining. Even some of the democratisation scholars that take elites as important units of analysis recognise that although ‘leadership obviously affects regime outcomes, particularly in the short run [...] leadership is less important than international and domestic structural variables’ in shaping regime trajectories (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 82). Unless we choose to believe that successful transitions are down to particularly skilled and ideologically committed individuals – thus accepting that a change of leadership would be enough to secure a democratic transition anywhere – we would have to admit that ‘leaders’ choices often are heavily structured by the domestic and international context in which they operate’ (*ibid*). This article does not claim that democratisation can solely be understood as a top-down process in which elites act independently of societal pressures, or outside the confines of the orientations that condition the rest of the members of a specific society, or indeed unaffected by international pressures and tendencies. It does recognise, however, that agency plays an important part in democratisation processes, and that irresponsible or inept behaviour by elites can severely damage the prospect of democratisation. Or as Alan Knight put it: ‘whether horse or jockey is more important is an old racing conundrum, to which most experts would reply that although jockeys can certainly lose races (i.e. elites can squander post-revolutionary opportunities), it is horses, not jockeys, that win races’ (1992, p. 119).

The role that elites and agency play in democratisation processes can simply not be ignored and, in fact, has to be considered as part of any multi-level model of democratisation (Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1995; Linz and Stepan 1996; Merkel 1998). It is equally important to acknowledge the role elites play in transitions to democracy as it is to identify the limitations of elite-driven theories. At the same time, by analysing the influence of the international context – intensified under the conditions of regional integration – the key role structural contingencies play in elite-level calculations is already being considered. Although international considerations may not, by themselves, explain all of the elites decisions, the international context plays an important part in shaping the transitions once they are set in motion. In the Spanish case, international leverage impacted, at the very least, the speed with which the transitions unfolded, which in turn helps explain the relative success of its democratisation process.

## **When linkage follows leverage: the Spanish elites and democratic conditionality**

The Spanish period of transition – let us say from the assassination by ETA of Franco’s chosen successor, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, in December 1973 until the ratification of the Constitution in December 1978 – coincided with a period of rapprochement between President Giscard d’Estaing of France and Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of Germany, which ‘followed up by the decision in 1976 to hold direct elections to the European Parliament, further reduced the distinction between domestic and foreign policies in European countries’ (Story and Pollack 1991, p. 141). Yet, although by the early 1970s the troubles of the 1960s – characterised by De Gaulle’s attempts (such as the ‘Empty Chair Crisis’ of 1965) to steer the Community away from the use of qualified majority voting in the Council and overall supranationalism (Vanke 2006, pp. 141-142) – which had slowed down the federalist impetus of European integration seemed to have been over, the eventual accession of Great Britain in 1973 decisively set the Community back onto an intergovernmental path. This move towards intergovernmentalism during the early 1970s – which was not to be significantly changed until, under the leadership of Jacques Delors, the SEA and the Treaty of Maastricht were implemented in 1987 and 1993 respectively – meant that ‘the bilateral dimension of intra-Community relations gained ground’ (Story and Pollack 2006, p. 133). Thus, the 1960s and 1970s move from multilateralism did not stop the increase in linkages between Spain and the rest of Europe. In fact, the move towards intergovernmentalism arguably allowed Spain – and in particular its elites – to bypass the EC (and its insistence on democratisation), and develop bilateral links with a number of European nations that were to have a bearing on its transition to democracy. In short, Spain could develop its linkage to Western Europe without having to comply with the implicit condition of democratisation.

Despite this slow bilateral rehabilitation, the regime’s ultimate foreign policy objective of inclusion into all Western international organisations did not seem to be any closer and, in fact, it was never to be achieved. Despite the regime’s increasingly comfortable position in the international arena during the 1960s, Western Europe (France and Germany in particular) remained strictly against a non-democratic Spain joining the Community and, what is more, remained a safe haven for the main opposition forces. The unilateral decision by the post-war French provisional government to close its border with Spain for two years, suggests that it was indeed the French who, influenced by their own struggles to re-establish their democracy during the war, took the commitment of seeing a transformation in Spain more seriously than any of the other Western allies (Whitehead 1986, p. 13). Although this initial commitment may have been overwhelmed by Cold War mentality, France remained the most important centre

from where the opposition in exile worked. Although very much irrelevant as an opposition force from the 1950s onwards, the Republican Government in exile settled in Paris in 1945 and continued with its operations there until its dissolution in 1977. Santiago Carrillo, the leader of the PCE, was also exiled in Paris from the end of the Civil War until his arrest in Spain in 1976; and it was primarily from France (and Portugal) that the PCE decided to coordinate its internal opposition to Francoism, which was very much characterised, in the earlier stages, by a guerrilla approach that looked to destabilise the regime (Tusell 2005, p. 79). France was also the base from where the exiled Socialist Party (PSOE), under the leadership of Rodolfo Llopi and the key assistance of former leader Indalecio Prieto – himself exiled in Mexico – started to develop its opposition strategies. It was at these early stages of the struggle that the Socialists chose an opposition strategy based almost entirely on external pressure to achieve the eventual transition to democracy (*ibid*, p. 75). It was also then that ‘Europe’ as a concept became an essential part of the political culture of the exiled opposition (Crespo MacLennan 2004, p. 54). The fact that Europe remained determined to exclude Spain from the process of integration based on the very existence of the Franco regime was more than mere political ammunition for the opposition; Europeanism became an essential part of the political ideology of the opposition forces based around Europe (*ibid*).

The Franco regime, thus, faced an even more challenging version of the dilemma so often faced by authoritarian regimes elsewhere: how to limit political liberalisation and the influence of opposition forces abroad, without necessarily limiting economic liberalisation or jeopardising the access to international markets and/or investment. After all, the regime’s main goal was survival. Thus, as has often been the case in third wave transitions, the regime’s change of policy direction towards economic liberalisation was ‘invariably made under some form of compulsion’ and was also a ‘defensive’ strategy that looked to maintain ‘(vulnerable) regime legitimacy’ (Pridham 1991, p. 14). The regime, therefore, needed liberalisation to boost its legitimacy as a modernising force in Spain, but it also desperately wanted to limit the influence international actors (foreign governments, opposition forces abroad or international organisations) could have in domestic affairs. If on top of this attempt by the regime to limit the effects of liberalisation and internationalisation on the domestic political system, we consider that more often than not ‘official declarations in favour of democracy in the abstract’ by democratic countries correlate ‘poorly with observable behaviour affecting specific interests and international relationships’ (Whitehead 1986, p. 7), then it is hardly surprising that democratic leverage is seen as an inefficient instrument of democratisation. Indeed, as said before the EU has been criticised for its inconsistency in applying negative conditionality (sanctions) when promoting democracy and human rights (Brummer 2009)

The case of Spain, however, was different. At elite level, at least, it is easier to identify the influence of the international context by looking at how the actions of domestic actors were constrained by international influences and conditions. At this point it should be noted that I am consciously referring to influence rather than power simply because, as Pridham reminds us (1991: 9), domestic actors during the earlier stages of liberalisation – more so than during the transition stage itself – ‘possess a substantial degree of autonomy’. When the balance of power between domestic actors is finely poised – as it was in Spain during the very early stages of the transition (Colomer 1995, p. 9) – influence rather than power is all it takes; in times of high uncertainty such as transitions to democracy (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986, pp. 3-5), secondary considerations such as the international context can lead to significant differences in the outcome of the process. In the case of Spain, the early liberalisation stage not only helped develop international linkages, but it was also a learning curve for Spanish elites. After this initial period it was clear that, although more often than not declarations in favour of democracy do not correlate to the actions taken by foreign democratic governments, the EC’s assertion that Spain had to democratise in order to be considered for membership, was one of those rare occasions when official statements actually had ‘considerable practical force’ (Whitehead 1986 p. 7). The Francoist elites had to learn the hard way – by having the regime’s attempts to open negotiations with the Community dismissed outright – that Europe’s support for democracy was, unlike NATO or the UN, more than mere rhetoric. When the letter sent in February 1962 by the Spanish Foreign Minister, Fernando María Castiella, to Walter Hallstein, the President of the Commission, asking for the opening of accession negotiations was merely acknowledged rather than properly replied to (Royo and Manuel 2003, pp. 6-7), the regime’s elites got the clearest indication possible that the EC would not accept a non-democratic country in its ranks.

Although some hope remained that Franco’s Spain would eventually reach some sort of association status, occurrences such as the one just described must have helped transform some ‘hard liners’ into ‘soft liners’. Certainly Europe’s rejection did not change the views of the ‘bunker’. But the strong rejection of the EC must have convinced some of the more pragmatist supporters of Francoism that the very ‘regime they helped to implant’ would ‘have to make use, in the foreseeable future, of some degree or some form of electoral legitimation’ (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986, p. 16), thus becoming ‘soft liner’ reformers rather than staunch *Franquistas*. In this instance, it can be seen how the increase in linkage to Europe increased the Spanish elite’s (in this case officials within the Franco regime) sensitivity to leverage, and how the European refusal to accept a non-democratic Spain into its ranks (i.e. the exercise of

leverage) at least partly helped to shape the preferences of certain members of the elite. Similarly, although the regime's attempts to get involved in the process of European integration never gained traction, the mere fact that the regime showed an interest in accessing the Community meant a change in policy. From then on the regime's elites and its ministers started to publicly recognise the key role Europe would play in Spain's development and were increasingly positive about Spain's role in the new Europe (Crespo MacLennan 2004: 47). This change in policy helped moderate, at least in public, some of the more radical views of some sectors of the regime's elites. Those who remained suspicious of the process of European integration were either removed or were not allowed to express their views openly.

What is more, there is no doubt that the regime's change in stance towards the EC provided the exiled opposition with a much-needed common discourse. The opposition based outside Spain had long been suffering from a lack of resources, a lack of support caused by Cold War calculations, and an increasingly divisive rift between different opposition groups and between the domestic and the international oppositions (Aguilar 2000, p. 303). The process of increasing approximation to Europe (i.e. the furthering of linkages) offered the opposition and the regime a common political objective, albeit for completely different reasons. Whilst the regime pretended to gain legitimacy by benefiting from Europe's economic boom, the opposition saw increasing cooperation with Europe as an opportunity to highlight the incompatibility between the regime and the Community, and also as an opportunity to strengthen its voice inside Spain. Santiago Carrillo's very public acceptance of Eurocommunism, for instance, signified the definitive end to the PCE's relationship with Moscow, and made the PCE's pro-European stance 'official'.

Although, there is a debate surrounding the reasons Carrillo had for embracing Eurocommunism, it is clear that this change in policy was a key factor in the transition. This shift in stance – according to Carrillo himself the communists were the first ones to 'bury the axe of war' – paved the way for the spirit of national reconciliation that was to characterise the transition (Edles 1998, p. 44). The Suárez government desperately needed to limit the social mobilisations that could threaten the reforms by giving the 'bunker' an excuse to use repression, and thus needed the PCE, with its historical ties with the trade unions (in particular the *Comisiones Obreras*), to 'induce moderation' amongst the ranks (Encarnación 2001, pp. 76-77). On the other hand, Carrillo needed the PCE to be legalised in order to participate in any future electoral process. Thus Carrillo and the Communists had no choice but to moderate their stance as part of a bargaining process with Adolfo Suárez's government, i.e. abandoning *ruptura* was the only way to gain legal status (Colomer 1995, pp. 68-77). The PCE's electoral

failure in the 1977 elections – receiving less than 10 per cent of the votes – would imply that, if it was merely an electoral and self-serving strategy, Carrillo made a big mistake when reading the public sentiment; the embracement of Eurocommunism pushed many of the PCE's core supporters to abandon the party, whilst the abandonment of *ruptura* did little to convince the majority of voters that the PCE's new-found moderation was genuine. An alternative interpretation, however, is that Carrillo's views had been actually moderated after spending forty years exiled in Paris, and that he decided to move his party towards that line rather than the other way around (Edles 1995, pp. 370-372). Carrillo knew he would lose electoral support but was personally committed to the democratisation of the country and Spain's eventual integration into Europe.

Probably the best example of Europe's influential role in bringing together the different opposition forces, and thus moderating the views of conflicting factions, undoubtedly relates to the meeting that took place in Munich in June of 1962. On the eve of the Europeanist Congress, a large group of Spanish 'delegates' representing the majority of Spanish opposition forces (except for the Communists), both domestic and in exile, got together with the objective of discussing the prospects for democracy and accession into Europe. In Munich there were socialists, liberals and Christian democrats, as well as republicans and monarchists, Basque and Catalan nationalists, and individuals who had fought against each other during the Civil War. Yet they all shared two very basic goals: the democratisation of Spain and its integration with Europe (Alvarez de Miranda 2003, p. 101). Although there were, of course, resentments between the different factions participating, these two common goals were what, according to one of the participants, united the individuals present and made consensus possible (*El Pais* 9/6/2012). The meeting in Munich was condemned by the regime, and portrayed by the loyal media outlets as a 'betrayal of Spain' (*ABC* 10/6/1962a), a 'farce' that was not representative of Spaniards' views and even called the meeting a 'New Munich Agreement' (*ABC* 10/6/1962b) (making allusion to the Munich Agreement of 1938 between Nazi Germany and the European powers). The regime's police forces were quick in arresting and/or detaining some of the delegates that had travelled from Spain. Some, like the Christian democrat Fernando Alvarez de Miranda and the monarchist Joaquın Satrustegi, were forced to spend a year of banishment in the Canary Islands, whilst others, such as Carmelo Cembrero, chose exile in other European countries (*El Pais* 9/6/2012). Many more of the participants lost their jobs, whilst the police harassed nearly all of them. This exaggerated reaction, besides being a misguided show of strength by the regime, had the very negative effect (from the regime's perspective of course) of straining Spain's relationships with the EC in general, and France and Germany in particular.

Whatever chances Franco's regime may have had of ever being allowed accession into the EC were extinguished right then (Alvarez de Miranda 2003, pp. 101-108).

More than the obviously important logistic support given by the different European nations (e.g. facilitating travel to the Congress) or the fierce criticism that was aimed at the regime afterwards, the role the 'idea of Europe' played as a unifying force during, before and after the Congress may have been just as important. In essence, it could be said that the process of Spanish integration with Western Europe (in the first instance with the development of informal linkages and then by the process of institutionalising these linkages) 'shaped' rather than 'made' the democratisation process. It would be a great leap to say that there is a direct causal link from integration to democratisation – at least at elite level – but we could say that Europe was a platform, a reinforcing example and an important source of consensus. After all, regardless of how we choose to explain the transition to democracy in Spain, there is no doubt that consensus took precedence over confrontation. I am not denying of course that 'the process of European integration interacted with a wide variety of domestic political and economic factors' (Fishman 2003, p. 32), but, at least at elite level, the process of European integration considerably increased the prospect of pro-democracy pacts being reached, as well as providing a clear incentive for these pacts to be reached quickly. The importance of the speed with which these agreements were reached and institutionalised (through the 1978 Constitution) should not be underestimated. Evidence from many recent democratisation processes (e.g. Mexico, Russia and Kenya) suggests that 'protracted transitions' – i.e. those that resemble 'a war of attrition' between the regime and the opposition parties over the 'microinstitutional foundations of the transition' (Eisendstadt 2000, p. 4) – simply tend to be far less successful. Certainly other factors, such as the low level of institutionalisation (in comparative perspective at least) of Franco's political structures (Ortega Ortiz 2008), also contributed towards the expedience with which the transition was achieved. Yet, the consensus on European integration and the clear reluctance of the EC to enter negotiations until the democratisation process was well on its way also contributed towards a generalised sense of urgency.

Not everyone agrees with this interpretation. The view that other than providing moral support to the democratic opposition 'there was very little Europe could do' (Carr and Fusi 1981, p. 214) is also common. Yet there is enough evidence to suggest that Western European countries and the EC, at the very least, played an active part in supporting democratic actors and, thus, influencing the elites' calculations. Even if we were to accept, however, that Europe could only provide moral support, we need to acknowledge that even this minimal influence may have had a significant impact on the calculations of key individuals. Carr and Fusi acknowledge that, if

nothing else for instance, King Juan Carlos, being chosen as the successor to Franco after the assassination of Carrero Blanco, needed the legitimacy that could only be provided by the backing of other European nations. Western Europe, unlike the United States, was certainly not going to provide its full backing to Juan Carlos until he proved his democratic credentials. After all, the reformist agenda eventually pursued by the King was more or less a surprise; we must not forget that Franco himself handpicked the King as his successor (Gilmour 1985). Indeed, Juan Carlos' first speech as King could hardly be described as an endorsement of political reform (Aguilar 2000, pp. 306-307), and his first attempt at forming a government, under the leadership of Carlos Arias Navarro, the last Prime Minister of the Franco era, did little to convince the domestic opposition or the international community that the King was a true democrat. The 'comedy of errors' that was Arias Navarro's government seemed like a half-hearted attempt to 'enact a few reforms, call the result a democracy, and hope for the best' (Gilmour 1985, p. 141). It was also during these early stages of the transition that European pressure reached its highest level. Before then, there had always been disagreements around Europe over how to react to the imminent transformations in Spain; whilst the conservative forces advocated for moderation, the socialist left considered that ending the Franco regime was a 'European mission' that was long overdue. Ultimately, the disappointing reforms of Arias Navarro, the King's apparent ambivalence towards reform, and the worrying situation in Portugal tilted the balance in favour of those who advocated a stronger stance against *continuismo* (Crespo MacLennan 2008, pp. 148-149).

How much of an influence did the barrage of European condemnation have on the King's 'sudden' decision to replace Arias Navarro with Adolfo Suárez, and embark on a far more comprehensive process of political reform, is impossible to know. Spain's romanticised version of its transition has long promoted the idea that Juan Carlos was never anything else than a staunch democrat. However, Juan Carlos had been directly appointed by Franco 'as the best guarantee for the continuation of the institutions and spirit of Francoism' (Carr and Fusi 1981, p. 207). Franco believed that with the King on the throne the future of the regime was *bien atado* (tied down) (Bermeo and Gracia-Durán 1994, p. 91), and Juan Carlos did not make his stance clear until his state visit to the United States in February 1976 when he described the Arias Navarro Government as an 'unmitigated disaster' (Aguilar 2000, p. 308). If this was his strategy all along or a reaction to changing circumstances, we will probably never know for sure. We should assume, however, that the King must have been influenced by pragmatism as much as by conviction. Juan Carlos was certainly aware of what was happening to his brother in law in Greece – where Constantine's failure to offer his unconditional support to Greece's attempts to establish a republican democracy at least partly led to the defeat of the monarchical

alternative in the referendum of 1974 – and of the increasingly antagonistic stance of individual members of Europe towards authoritarian regimes in its periphery. The more or less generalised outrage in Europe that followed the execution of three communist and two ETA members in September 1975 was a clear indication that Europe was ready to take the gloves off. Although the executions went ahead, the regime was seriously damaged by the episode, and was even forced to defend itself after reports by the BBC suggested there was widespread rebellion in the Francoist ranks (*Informaciones*, 27/09/1975). Yet again, it seems that Europe's use of its leverage potential (i.e. the threat to withdrawal public support for the new monarch) played at least some part in shaping the preferences of King Juan Carlos.

By this stage it was not only painstakingly clear that the EC would not allow non-democratic countries to join its ranks, but also that the Community was going to be 'stricter' with Spanish democracy than with that of Greece or Portugal. Concerns from several member states – France in particular – regarding the very real challenges Spanish accession would bring to the newly established CAP were partly behind this intensified scrutiny, and it was a sobering fact already recognised by some at the time of the transition (Poulantzas 1976, p. 29). But it is also true that Spanish isolation from Europe had been longer and deeper than that of Greece or Portugal. The Greek dictatorship lasted less than a decade and Salazar's *Estado Novo* was never entirely isolated because of its close relationship with Great Britain. Portugal's status as a historical ally of the British had even enabled Portugal to participate in the alternative British-led process of integration framed under the European Free Trade Association (Powell 2007, p. 52). Spain's isolation from Western European organisations had been total. The EC had already used the political conditions set in the 1961 Birkelbach Report as the main reason not to start accession negotiations with Franco; similarly the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly had already explicitly declared that only members of a freely elected Spanish Parliament under a constitutional regime would be eligible to participate as Representatives of the Assembly, thus effectively banning Spanish participation under Franco (Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Resolution 15, 28/8/1950). All these meant that the Franco regime was excluded from any of the European organisations.

This complete isolation was not only an embarrassment for the regime but also provided a strong symbolic statement for elites across the political spectrum. Once there was a consensus amongst the different elites that a transition to democracy was desirable, it became clear that only the explicit recognition of the EC – inherent in accepting Spain's participation in Europe – would be enough to legitimise the new Spanish democracy. By refusing to baulk on its democratic conditionality, the different European organisations (the Community and the

Council of Europe) became the only judges with enough legitimacy to sanction the emerging democracy (Powell 2007, pp. 52-54). On the other hand, the eventual integration into Europe's main political and economic organisations – and the inherent process of Europeanisation this meant for Spain – was, particularly from the 1970s onwards, regarded as synonymous of modernisation (*ibid*: 53). In the mid 1970s the influential magazine *Cambio 16* summarised this widespread view; the magazine believed that accession into Europe was more than a short-term solution for orange farmers and bicycle cranks producers, and called it an alternative way of modernisation (Díaz Dorronsoro 2012, p. 64). Since modernisation was the ultimate goal and accession into Europe was regarded as synonymous with modernisation, there was not a single elite group that could afford to be seen as an obstacle to integration. Thus explaining why all political leaders and other elites supported accession into Europe.

The influence of this strong consensus and the impact it had on the democratisation of the country should not be underestimated. The fact is that Brussels had made it very clear that political reform was the very first step towards integration; the elites knew it and so did the electorate. The fact that Spanish elites believed that democracy was a condition for European integration and that without it there would be no 'modernisation' of Spain helped move the transition forward. The elites similarly acknowledged that only the Community could give the emerging democratic regime the legitimacy it so badly needed. Given that the Spanish economy risked being left behind if Spain did not join the Common Market, and that the vast majority of the population saw integration with Europe in a positive light, elites from all sides of the political spectrum saw integration into Europe as essential. Europe's insistence on democracy, coupled with the elites' calculations of the costs of not joining, meant that the Spanish elites' sensitivity towards European opinion increased exponentially, thus the costs of repression or democratic regressions became higher. In other cases where political considerations have been completely ignored, regional integration does not necessarily improve democracy. The case of North American integration is often used to prove this point. The United States' silence on political conditionality and reluctance to pressure the Mexican elites (Calderón Martínez 2014) for example, meant that the political elites in Mexico were able to deal with democratic opposition – for a good while anyways – with a combination of violence, intimidation and coercion, as the elites did not see the economic agreement linked to their attitudes towards democracy (Gentleman and Zubek 1992).

## **Conclusion**

This analysis of how internationalisation influenced the Spanish transition helps illustrate how

sensitive elites are to international pressure when transitions to democracy overlap with projects of internationalisation, or when access to perceived economic benefits is condition on democratic reforms. In the case of Spain, 'Europe as a political example was probably far more important for Spain [...] than the European Union as a set of material incentives' (Fishman 2003, p. 40). There is little doubt that gaining access to the Common Market was an incentive for all the Spanish elites. The key issue here, however, is that Europe decided to actively engage in Spanish democratisation; by conditioning accession into European institutions to democratic reforms, the EC was effectively using its leverage potential. This conditionality in itself was certainly not enough to cause the democratisation of Spain but it certainly played a part in shaping the process. European integration was probably the only thing every single sector of society, political party or key actor could agree on. The widespread belief that EC membership was key to the development of Spain injected the process of democratisation with a certain degree of urgency; without democracy there would be no entry into the Common Market, and without the Common Market there would be no modernisation of Spain.

This sort of consensus at elite level, even if on a single issue, can make all the difference during democratic transitions. This is particularly relevant in cases where the democratic opposition is simply not strong enough to force a complete break with the previous regime. Consensus on a single overarching issue can considerably increase the speed with which elite pacts are reached. It is widely accepted that 'long transitions', which usually start at the subnational level, and that not achieve a quick institutionalisation of democracy (invariably reached by either pacts or imposition) are less successful in consolidating multi-level democracies than those that do (Hiskey and Bowler 2005). At the same time, elites are far more susceptible to international leverage when, as the Spanish case elucidates, transitions to democracy take place simultaneously to internationalisation projects. Elites are considerably more susceptible to leverage during the earlier stages of the transition and when access to international markets or international organisation can be conditioned. Once treaties have been signed or access has been granted, however, the leverage potential decreased greatly. In other words, the 'carrot' of allowing access is far more effective than the 'stick' of withdrawing access (or threatening to do so) once this has already been granted; 'the temptation of the carrot is strong [only] as long as the offer of membership has not yet been made, since then the stick of conditionality could become an empty threat' (Dimitrova and Pridham 2004, p.109). Positive conditionality seems to have been particularly effective in the Spanish case. The EU and other international actors could thus still learn a lesson from the Spanish transition to democracy.

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