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Historical Memory in the Manifestos of Spanish Political Parties

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## INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, Spain has begun to meaningfully confront its own historical memory for the first time since its transition to democracy. Perhaps more than any other Western European nation, Spain struggles with narratives of memory that are particularly prominent and polarizing. Long left unresolved by a fragile peace, its non-addressal of its past has left old wounds to reopen. Foremost in this struggle are the memories of the country's 1936-1939 civil war, the following dictatorship of Francisco Franco, and the transition back to democracy itself. By exploring these differing memories and understandings of a shared past, it is possible to uncover how this memory is conveyed, formed, and reformed by the distinct cleavages that make up Spanish society.

This thesis analyzes this reckoning of memory at the heart of Spanish society by examining how political parties in the country chose to address historical memory from 2000 to the present. It also surveys which histories and narratives political parties choose to remember and employ for their political purposes. Such parties and their positions offer a valuable perspective into how both politicians and the public they are elected by understand and represent their own past. The question is thus twofold: how do differing parties discuss historical memory and which memories do they choose to invoke?

To understand political parties' stances on memory, this thesis utilizes electoral manifestos issued prior to each Spanish national election during the period studied. These manifestos are fine-tuned to voter bases and current issues, including historical memory. The Manifesto Project Database serves as the source for these documents and breaks them into more precise datasets. By separating written discourse into sentences or segments, it allows for the analysis of both the amount of content dedicated to historical memory and the frequency of more

specific themes within memory. The themes within historical memory discussed in this research are memory laws, the victims of war and dictatorship, Francoist symbology, and the memory of terrorism. Findings are further broken down based on whether parties represent national or regional cleavages, which indicate differences in shared memory among the many regional divisions within Spain. These differences in memory are critical, representing the diverging narratives which underpin the identity and nationhood of Spain.

Analysis showed that, foremost, the amount of space in manifestos dedicated to memory has increased over the period, regardless of partisanship. Sustained interest in memory from election to election is, however, largely limited to national parties, with regional parties not consistently addressing the issue. With few exceptions, clear ideological divides exist in how parties approach memory. Those left of center tend to be particularly vocal, focusing on the injustices of the war and dictatorship, something they communicate in their manifestos and related discourse. Right-wing parties reject this line of thought, preferring non addressal or to focus on the memory issues connected to terrorism. Spain's newly returned far-right, meanwhile, has shown itself to be a committed defender of the legacies left-wing parties believe need to be addressed. It is in this tangled confluence of partisan understandings regarding a shared past that Spain's efforts to remember are framed.

## **BACKGROUND**

The first half of the 20th century proved chaotic for Spanish politics. Against the backdrop of a disintegrating colonial empire and increasing irrelevance on the world stage, Spain's domestic politics were dominated first by a weak constitutional system, then a trio of

dictators backed by the military and monarchy. In 1931, the nation returned to republican government under anti-monarchist and pro-democracy forces. This transformation failed to prevent economic crisis, persistent strikes, and political violence. In July 1936, following elections that brought left-wing parties into power, much of the Spanish military turned on the fragile Second Republic. The resulting coup d'état drew on the traditionalist elements of Spanish society; Carlists, Catholic hardliners, traditionalists, landowners, and the nobility, collectively known as Nationalists. These factions were not new bedfellows. In the 19th century, they had led Spain into three civil wars, the Carlist wars, to halt liberal reforms and install a legitimist line of the royal family to power.<sup>12</sup> In the following three-year civil war, the Nationalist forces would successfully defeat Republican resistance in a conflict that would sweep every mainland province.

Even from its early stages, the war was marred with extreme partisan violence and butchery.<sup>3</sup> In the opening days of the war, Republican forces committed killings in what would become known as the “Red Terror,” a sporadic targeting of perceived enemies of the state that would claim some 70,000 lives. Chief among these enemies was the Catholic church and clergy, the lynchpin of conservative power.<sup>4</sup> Under advancing Nationalist forces, political violence reached a further extreme in the “White Terror”. Deemed *limpieza social*, social cleansing, Nationalist death squads perpetrated the mass killings of Republicans, Romani, Freemasons, intellectuals, atheists, and regionalists. Massacres at Monte de Estépar, Badajoz, and, most

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<sup>1</sup> Jackson, G. (1966). *The Spanish Republic and the Civil War 1931-1939*. (1965). Princeton, N.J.

<sup>2</sup> Though nominally fought over questions of dynastic succession, the Carlist wars unified the traditionalist and clerical elements of Spain to fight against the perceived liberal reforms of the monarchy. Centralization, minor land redistribution, the end of the inquisition, and decreasing social influence of the Catholic Church horrified Carlists, and went on to inspire future generations of Spanish conservatives.

<sup>3</sup> Howson, G. (1999). *Arms for Spain: The Untold Story of the Spanish Civil War*. St. Martin's Press.

<sup>4</sup> de la Cueva, J. (1998). Religious Persecution, Anticlerical Tradition and Revolution: On Atrocities against the Clergy during the Spanish Civil War. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 33(3), 355–369.

famously, Guernica, became part of a politicide that claimed the lives of some 200,000. Aiding the Nationalist cause and resulting atrocities were Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, eager to install a fellow fascist government in Southern Europe.<sup>5</sup>

By its end in 1939, the civil war claimed the lives of some 600,000 Spaniards.<sup>6</sup> Another 470,000 were forced into exile, primarily in neighboring France.<sup>7</sup> That March, Generalissimo Francisco Franco, commander of the Nationalist forces, entered Madrid, the final bastion of Republican resistance. His path to power cleared by the convenient deaths of rival Nationalist generals Mola, Goded, and Sanjurjo, Franco began a 39-year rule. Victorious in war, Franco ruled in a definitive age for Spain, one which saw ultra-traditionalist government as massive demographic, economic, and social changes swept the nation.

To govern Spain, Franco bundled all Nationalist organizations into the Traditionalist Spanish Phalanx of the Councils of the National Syndicalist Offensive, more simply known as FET, the sole legal political party. It came to dominate all government institutions, serving as a rubber stamp for the whims of Franco and the army.<sup>8</sup> Francoist ideology was best summed up in the tripartite motto the dictator ordered printed on all newspapers: “one fatherland, one state, one leader.” The slogan, blatantly taken from a similar Nazi saying, emphasized the ideology of the new state, a unified government under the personal control of Franco, ruling a homogeneous Castilian nation.<sup>9</sup>

Initially diplomatically isolated as one of Europe’s last fascist states, Spain embraced an

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<sup>5</sup> Jackson, G. (1966). *The Spanish Republic and the Civil War 1931-1939*. (1965). Princeton, N.J.

<sup>6</sup> Romero, F. J. (2013). *Historical dictionary of the Spanish Civil War*. Scarecrow Press.

<sup>7</sup> Casanova, J & Juliá, Santos. (2006). *Víctimas de la guerra civil*. Temas de Hoy.

<sup>8</sup> Payne, S. (2000). *The Franco Regime, 1936-1975*. Phoenix.

<sup>9</sup> Preston, P. (1998). *Las Tres Españas del 36*. Plaza & Janes Editores, S.A.

Atlanticist foreign policy which brought it into the orbit of the United States in the 1950s. The country's strategic position and the promise of an anticommunist ally brought substantial investment and aid.<sup>10</sup> Led by technocrats and American funds, the rest of Franco's rule would coincide with an enormous economic boom dubbed the "Spanish miracle," which would see frenetic growth and development.<sup>11</sup> At no point, however, did Franco abandon the core fascist and traditionalist ideologies fought for in the civil war. Rigorous censorship, book burnings, political purges, executions, and disappearances continued, often motivated by absurd and elaborate conspiracy theories concerning Masonic, Jewish, and communist plots.

By the time he died in 1975, Franco was aware of the challenges his dictatorship faced. Rapid economic growth and close cooperation with the United States had endowed Spanish fascism considerable longevity but Franco, ever the pariah, lived to see himself become Western Europe's last dictator. In 1974, racked by war and protest, Greece's Junta of the Colonels surrendered the reins of power to democratic government.<sup>12</sup> In neighboring Portugal, Franco's old ally, the seemingly eternal Novo Estado, was peacefully overthrown in the Carnation Revolution.<sup>13</sup> Spain's transition to democracy would not be marked by the speed and stability that was seen in Greece and Portugal.

Franco was succeeded as head of state by King Juan Carlos I, the grandson of the nation's final king, Alfonso XIII. The young monarch quickly made clear his desire to return Spain to the parliamentary monarchy, turning the clock back. Appointed to lead the transition was the savvy

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<sup>10</sup> González, M. (2018). *America's shameful rapprochement to the Franco dictatorship*. El País English Edition.

<sup>11</sup> Prados de la Escosura, L. (2016, December 21). *Spanish economic growth in the long run: What historical national accounts show*. VoxEU CEPR; Centre for Economic Policy Research.

<sup>12</sup> Koliopoulos, G., & Veremēs, T. (2007). *Greece: The Modern Sequel: From 1831 to the Present*. Hurst & Company.

<sup>13</sup> Osuna, J. J. O. (2014). The deep roots of the Carnation Revolution: 150 years of military interventionism in Portugal. *Portuguese Journal of Social Science*, 13(2), 215–231.

but largely unknown Adolfo Suárez, tasked with overseeing the transformation from autocracy to democracy. In 1977, the first free elections were held for the Cortes General. A year later, Spain adopted a new democratic constitution, still in use today.<sup>14</sup>

While democratization was underway, Spain was convulsed by a new wave of sectarian violence. In the Basque Country, the secessionist terrorist group Basque Country & Freedom (ETA) unleashed a wave of violence that would claim the lives of politicians, police, and civilians alike. Founded nearly 20 years early, it proved the most effective and fearsome of the paramilitary and terrorist groups born in opposition to the government in Madrid.<sup>15</sup> In 1980 alone, the height of the terror, the organization would claim nearly 100 lives.<sup>16</sup> Simultaneously, the anti-fascist GRAPO targeted government officials and conducted a campaign of bombings. Also taking advantage of state weakness, rival neo fascist cells began occasional terrorism and assassination campaigns, most prominently in the 1977 Atocha Massacre, which left five prominent labor lawyers dead at the hands of the Alianza Apostólica Anticomunista (Triple A).<sup>17</sup>

In February 1981, as the new government struggled under the pressure of conflicts in the Basque Country and the resignation of Suárez, junior military officers took one last desperate gamble at restoring fascist rule. Led by Antonio Tejero, a group of mutineers took the Congress of Deputies, the nation's parliament, hostage in a bid to convince the king and fellow army units to retake political power. The coup failed spectacularly, denounced by king and armed forces, ending with the humiliating arrest of the conspirators only 18 hours later by the very military

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<sup>14</sup> Bregolat, E. (1999). Spain's Transition to Democracy. *SAIS Review (1989-2003)*, 19(2), 149–155.

<sup>15</sup> Watson, C. (2008). *Basque Nationalism and Political Violence: The Ideological and Intellectual Origins of ETA*. University of Nevada Press.

<sup>16</sup> Woodworth, P. (2001). Why Do They Kill? *World Policy Journal*, 18(1), 1–12.

<sup>17</sup> Brysk, A. (2007). *National Insecurity and Human Rights: Democracies Debate Counterterrorism*. California University Press.



they had believed would rally to their side.<sup>18</sup> With this final act, it became clear that neither army, nor king, nor country wished to return to Francoism.

In the years following the transition to democracy, parties across the political spectrum acknowledged the inherent fragility of Spain's fledgling institutions and political order. This state led to the formation of what would be known as the "Pact of Forgetting," the informal agreement between political forces to not address the history of the civil war or subsequent dictatorship. Political parties, regardless of persuasion, decided to not to confront historical memory, recognizing that doing so could undermine the return to democracy. In doing so, any attempt at transitional justice or addressal was also neglected. Many parties, especially on the left, were concerned by the long shadow of the armed forces, whose tradition of antidemocratic intervention via violent coups was so prevalent it had acquired a pseudo-ideological label, *golpismo* (literally coup-ism).<sup>19</sup> In neglecting the past, these parties believed that such tendencies could be avoided.

The "Pact of Forgetting" was exemplified by one of the first actions of the nation's new government, the 1977 Amnesty Law which provided blanket protection for those who committed any manner of war crimes and abuses during the war and dictatorship. In theory, the act was designed to protect crimes committed by both sides, forming a clean slate on which to rebuild the nation. Former Republicans were allowed to return from exile and political prisoners were freed, a win for the left. Meanwhile, those who had participated in crimes against humanity, especially within the military and Francoist bureaucracy, would not face consequences. The law's largest beneficiary was the armed forces, culpable for many of the abuses under Franco, whose

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<sup>18</sup> Blanco, J. (1996). *23-F: Crónica Fiel de un Golpe Anunciado*. Fuerza Nueva Editorial.

<sup>19</sup> Preston, P. (1986). *Las Derechas Españolas en el Siglo XX: Autoritarismo, Fascismo y Golpismo*. Editorial Sistema, Madrid.

questionable allegiance to the new democracy represented an enormous threat, a fear validated by the failed coup four years later.<sup>20</sup> Also instrumental in the drafting and passage of the law itself were many former Francoist officials, men whose past actions, without amnesty, could have had legal consequences. Thus, with the passage of the Amnesty Law, Spain's new government abandoned any air of transitional justice or stance on memory.

This status quo, the "Pact of Silence," would be maintained by the governments of three separate prime ministers, and respective parties. Though public interest had remained, it would not until 2004 would a major party begin to signal dissatisfaction with the arrangement. That year, the newly elected Prime Minister José Zapatero would begin work on what would become the 2007 Historical Memory Law, a momentous departure from tradition. Like many Spaniards, for Zapatero the issue was deeply personal, his interest in politics having been inspired by the memory of his paternal grandfather, a Republican captain executed by fascist forces in the opening days of the war.<sup>21</sup>

## THEORY

For all nations, groups, or communities, historical memory describes the ways in which that particular population collectively recalls and identifies with narratives of a shared history. Historical memory is thus synonymous with collective memory, the pooled memory of a group and tied to social identity and belonging. These concepts were first put forward in the French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs' posthumous 1950 *La mémoire collective*. In his work, Halbwachs advanced the argument that human collectives share group memory that

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<sup>20</sup> Encarnacion, O. G. (2014). *Democracy Without Justice in Spain: The Politics of Forgetting*. United States: University of Pennsylvania Press, Incorporated.

<sup>21</sup> Campillo Madrigal, O. (2004). *Zapatero: Presidente de la Primera*. La Esfera de Los Libros.

transcends the individual and exists beyond the confines of personal memory.<sup>22</sup> Collective memory, he argued, was governed by two “laws,” twin trends within shared recollection: fragmentation and concentration. Together, these polar laws, in an almost Newtonian sense, represented the coagulation and simultaneous disintegration of collective narratives.<sup>23</sup>

Collective memory does not deny the importance of the individual as the foundation for a larger shared dimension of memory. Halbwachs and other theorists stress that the individual is still the impetus of memory, and that collective historical memories are built from individual memory and will be subject to personal variation between individuals in the same group.<sup>24</sup> Young suggests considering collective memory as also “collected memory,” recognizing the individual as a personal “collector” of memory, piecing together memory from themselves and the collective.<sup>25</sup> Shared memory relies on what psychologists label “collaborative recall,” the cognitive tendencies of humans to pool and revisit information and memory via the group, depending on multiple brains as opposed to one.<sup>26</sup> These mechanisms do not, however, suggest a primacy of either individual or collective memory.

Collaborative recall tends to have sizable effects on memory in the formation from the individual to the collective. The group setting allows for exposure, the correction of errors, and improved retention of memory. Collective recall, however, also leads to collaborative inhibition, the reduction and reformation of personal memory in the face of the collected memories of others.<sup>27</sup> This, and other paths by which group memory solidifies around shared narratives, is

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<sup>22</sup> Halbwachs, M., & Coser, L. A. (2020). *On Collective Memory*. University of Chicago Press.

<sup>23</sup> Nünning, A., & Erll, A. (Eds.). (2008). *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Walter De Gruyter.

<sup>24</sup> Russell, N. (2006). Collective Memory before and after Halbwachs. *The French Review*, 79(4), 792–804.

<sup>25</sup> Young, J. (1994). *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. Yale University Press.

<sup>26</sup> Coman, A., Brown, A. D., Koppel, J., & Hirst, W. (2009). Collective Memory from a Psychological Perspective. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 22(2), 125–141.

<sup>27</sup> Harris, C. B., Paterson, H. M., & Kemp, R. I. (2008). Collaborative recall and collective memory: what happens when we remember together?. *Memory (Hove, England)*, 16(3), 213–230.

what ultimately underpins historical memory. Halbwachs and Wertsch both write of collective historical memory and history itself as separated by their respective reliability. They posit that “history” is the objective and multi-faceted truth of the past, based in fact and logic, whether we remember accurately or not. Shared memories, on the other hand, are the retellings and explorations of that same history from the single perspective of the group, endowed with their own biases, goals and values.<sup>28</sup> A group’s recalling of history, a constantly repeated action throughout time, thus helping to weave the narrative threads of memory. These memories do not necessarily have to be accurate, in many cases they are not, thanks to group bias.

The historical memory of the collective is often attached to or influenced by the policies and goals of the state. In a multitude of dimensions, whether by education, legal systems, speech, or any manner of policy, governments find themselves as important curators and contributors to memory. The politics and policy of memory have existed since time immemorial. In their most direct, memory policy took the form of the wholesale elimination of the very existence of a person or event from memory, *damnatio memoriae*. Such was the fate of the heretical Egyptian pharaohs, traitorous doges of Venice, and enemies of Stalin. Most modern governments continue the act of shaping historical memory and impressing respective preferences, albeit usually via legal systems and legislation. Heinze writes that government influence on memory can be direct and, in some cases punitive, targeting narratives, events, and ideologies. However, memory policy is just as often taken up by non-government groups in a society, and even state-sanctioned memory is sometimes itself the unintended consequence of other governmental acts.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Wertsch, J. V., & Roediger, H. L., 3rd (2008). Collective memory: conceptual foundations and theoretical approaches. *Memory (Hove, England)*, 16(3), 318–326.

<sup>29</sup> Heinze, E. (2018, December 5). *Theorizing Law and Historical Memory: Denialism and the Pre-Conditions of Human Rights*. Ssrn.com.

The sheer breadth of history, even that of one group, eventually leads to a selectivity of historical memory within the group itself. These loci of collective understanding, be it people, places, events, or objects, are upheld as spaces of group memory. Pierre Nora writes of these as *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory), “where memory crystallizes and secretes itself,” the places where a “sense of historical continuity persists.”<sup>30</sup> Collective memory is thus maintained and fostered by these *lieux*, which act as touchstones reminding us of a past, one so vast and varied not all stories can be remembered.<sup>31</sup> From these places of memory, national memory is reinforced and retold, further crystallizing a shared historical memory. For Nora, in his native France, he writes of *lieux* having taken the shape of Jeanne d’Arc, the Tricolour, the Gallic cock, and Bastille, iconic symbols of national identity and culture.<sup>32</sup> Assmann and Czaplicka describe these as “islands of time,” places for group contemplation, cultural formation, and shared memory, without which collective memory is impossible.<sup>33</sup> In this, they are a product of the nature of collective historical memory, the transformation of individual into group memory, and subsequent centralization.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent years have brought increased scholarly attention to historical memory in Spain, whether broadly or in tandem with more nuanced focuses on individual aspects of memory. This interest is not isolated from the increase in emphasis placed on the topic in the public sphere but

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<sup>30</sup> Nora, P. (1989). Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire. *Representations*, 26, 7–24.

<sup>31</sup> Maerker, A., Sleight, S., & Sutcliffe, A. (Eds.). (2018). *History, Memory and Public Life: The Past in the Present* (1st ed.). Routledge.

<sup>32</sup> Nora, P., & Kritzman, L. (1998). *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past. Vol. 3, Symbols*. Columbia University Press.

<sup>33</sup> Assmann, J., & Czaplicka, J. (1995). Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. *New German Critique*, 65, 125–133.

is a product of it. In this, many individuals and actors have contributed to a growing understanding of Spanish historical memory. Developments like the re-interment of Franco, new memory laws, and political politicization have led to considerable inquiry into the factors that make memory in Spain so simultaneously critical to understand the nation, yet equally diverse and disorganized. Existing literature and new developments have revealed several prominent dynamics and traits that underlie the politics of memory in Spain.

### *MEMORY IN FORMATION*

Existing literature shows that Spain's historical memory of the period from 1936 to the present remains in its nascency. Though historical memory relies on the collective, the congealing of group memory into larger narratives, memory in Spain remains highly concentrated and framed by the individual. Santos Juliá, among others, writes of the "individual nature of memory" in Spain,<sup>34</sup> the supremacy of personal memory in relation to recent history, not yet surrendered to the collective.<sup>35</sup> This circumstance does not negate the importance of the collective memory of history but reveals a dichotomous relationship between it and that of the individual. In this, recency may be a critical factor. Almost half of Spaniards alive today were born during the rule of Franco, and a small but vocal minority are old enough to remember or have lived through the civil war itself.<sup>36</sup> This abundance of lived personal memory may explain the individual character of national historical memory.

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<sup>34</sup> Juliá, S. (2007). "De nuestras memorias y de nuestras miserias." *Hispania Nova. Revista de Historia Contemporánea* 7.

<sup>35</sup> López-Quñones, A. G. (2012). A Secret Agreement: The Historical Memory Debate and the Limits of Recognition. *Hispanic Issues on Line, Fall 2012*, 88–116.

<sup>36</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estadística (Ed.). (2016). *Población residente por fecha, sexo y edad*. Instituto Nacional de Estadística.

One noted example of this phenomena has been explored in the field of education. Magill's extensive work interviewing both private and public secondary school teachers shows that pupil's instruction on the civil war and transition may vary considerably based on the personal experiences and memories of their respective teachers. Students came from varying perspectives and circumstances themselves, as did their instructors, leading to lack of uniformity on how to teach the topics. Even instructors who came from similar ideological, regional, or professional backgrounds were shown to teach about these sensitive periods along totally opposite lines, informed by their own convictions and understandings of history as it related to the present. This variation in instruction ranged from those who borderline neglected any meaningful reference to the events of the period to those who openly challenged student's opinions and comprehension of history.<sup>37</sup>

Similar surveys of students support the existence of this lack of consensus, as well as weak education on the issues. Like their teachers, students of similar backgrounds often had acutely varying memories of the same events.<sup>38</sup> Such findings validate the idea that, across generational divides, historical memory has yet to totally crystalize even within otherwise similar personal identities. Best put by Walsh, Spain's understanding of history is not exclusively based on the collective, but likewise the ever-flowing "avalanche" of personal memory.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Magill, C. A. (2013). *Teaching the Conflict, Teaching the Transition : History Education and Historical Memory in Contemporary Spain*.

<sup>38</sup> Díez-Gutiérrez, E-J. (2022). "Políticas Educativas sobre Memoria Histórica en la Escuela en España: El Olvido de la Represión y la Resistencia en el Franquismo." *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, vol. 30, no. 72–74, pp. 1–17.

<sup>39</sup> Ribeiro de Menezes, A., Quance, R. A., & Walsh, A. L. (2009). *Guerra y Memoria en la España Contemporánea*. Editorial Verbum.

*TWO SPAINS*

Spain's treatment of historical memory and memory policy at large has varied greatly between individual and local actors and those at the national level. The death of Franco and transition in the late 1970s brought an "explosion of collective memory" as the nation embraced new civil liberties. Thanks to new rights to speech, a myriad of films, literature, art, and media began to tackle long suppressed memories.<sup>40</sup> It would be this blossoming of national memory that helped upend the careful efforts of Franco and his regime to control the memory of the events of the civil and the most foundational vestiges at the heart of Spanish national identity.<sup>41</sup> Comparative research and archives show some local political groups and governments doggedly joined this pursuit of memory. In Granada, with Franco's recent death, locals began to agitate for the locating of their relatives dumped in mass graves.<sup>42</sup> In other parts of the nation, local politicians aided in conversations around memory, especially relating to lost local loved ones. In the quaint Extremaduran village of Torremejía the mayor and other prominent figures made national headlines and faced legal repercussions for digging up the common graves of war victims.<sup>43</sup> Such events demonstrated that despite a national culture of silence, individuals, organizations, and local actors quickly began to meaningfully revisit and remember historical narratives, many of which had personal implications.

The flurry of memory activity following the end of the dictatorship did not penetrate the upper echelons of national government. For Spain's elite, the transition was instead underpinned by the disregard of memory. Colmeiro argues that historical memory was a casualty of

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<sup>40</sup> Colmeiro, J. (2011) "A Nation of Ghosts?: Haunting, Historical Memory and Forgetting in Post-Franco Spain." *452°F: Revista de Teoría de la Literatura y Literatura Comparada*; Núm. 4 (2011); p. 17-34.

<sup>41</sup> Magill, *Teaching the Conflict, Teaching the Transition*.

<sup>42</sup> Soro, J. M. (2006). *Cuadernos para el Diálogo, 1963-1976*. Marcial Pons Historia.

<sup>43</sup> Aguilar Fernández, P., & León Cáceres, G. (2022). Los orígenes de la memoria histórica en España: los costes del emprendimiento memorialista en la transición. *Historia y Política: Ideas, Procesos y Movimientos Sociales*, AOL.



“transition as a transaction” between the military and political elites. In exchange for removing themselves from political life and intrigue, the armed forces, still a bastion of Francoist sentiment, could disregard the human and historical consequences of the 40-year grip on power.<sup>44</sup> The “Pact of Silence” and its legal manifestations thus served as the codification of the oblivion of memory, not its extinction but the “denial of its relevance” in the reborn democracy.<sup>45</sup> Unlike other democratizing southern European nations, Spain made no attempts at transitional justice or addressing memory at a national level.<sup>46</sup> Available literature points to this alliance among the political classes as producing an unusual double dimension to historical memory, one which saw unofficial personal or local channels become the only channels of memory, while official channels remained non-existent. The Spanish government had, in effect, surrendered the traditional interest of the state in building and framing its own history.<sup>47</sup> This strange paralysis served to leave Spain at a junction, historical memory stunted and half-understood by its exclusion from the halls of power, the lack of official channels thus delaying and undermining meaningful explorations of a nation’s shared history.<sup>48</sup>

### *GLOBAL MEMORY*

Though unique, Spain is not alone in its struggles to address historical memory. Historical memory is universal, not confined to specific nations, nor the nation-state itself. Spain’s experiences with internal strife, dictatorship, and the transition to democracy are not

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<sup>44</sup> Jünke, C. (2016). “23-F and/in Historical Memory in Democratic Spain.” *Journal of Romance Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 6–21.

<sup>45</sup> Resina, J. R. (2017). *The Ghost in the Constitution: Historical Memory and Denial in Spanish Society*. Liverpool University Press.

<sup>46</sup> Sumalla, J. M. T. (2011) “Transition, Historical Memory and Criminal Justice in Spain.” *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 729–52.

<sup>47</sup> Resina, J. R. *The Ghost in the Constitution*.

<sup>48</sup> Colmeiro, “A Nation of Ghosts?”

unusual in the scheme of the 20th century history. Instead, its unique nature lies in the initial unresponsiveness to and polarization of these memories. The newfound interest in historical memory by political parties and national governments in Spain instead joins a long-held tradition of memory politics throughout Europe and Latin America.

The historical memory of fascism is prominent in Europe far beyond Spain, with virtually all European nations grappling with the topic at some societal and institutional level. Primarily, the history of World War II and Nazism dominate memory policy and discourse. Legislation varies considerably, targeting fascist symbology, genocide denialism and, in some cases, culpability. Some sixteen nations criminalize Holocaust denial and nearly as many have prohibitions on the public glorification of Nazi Germany and related authoritarian regimes. These policies were first introduced in Austria in 1947 from which they expanded in historical scope and were further adopted by other nations.<sup>49</sup> Poland's controversial 2018 Act on the Institute of National Remembrance serves as the most extreme example, banning speech suggesting that any Polish nationals collaborated in the Holocaust. Decried domestically and abroad, the now defunct legislation was part of a broader push by the Law and Justice Party to remove what they saw as the "pedagogy of disgrace" from Polish national memory and protect national pride.<sup>50</sup>

Historical memory has also been a prominent political topic in the Southern Cone of South America, prominently in Argentina and Chile. Like their former colonial overlord, both nations reemerged as electoral democracies following bloody US-backed Cold War dictatorships. For both regimes, Spain's Francoist tradition served as a major ideological and organizational inspiration. Unlike Spain, the return to democracy in these nations brought an immediate focus

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<sup>49</sup> Art, D. (2005). *The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>50</sup> Żuk, P. (2018). Nation, national remembrance, and education – Polish schools as factories of nationalism and prejudice. *Nationalities Papers*, 46, 1046 - 1062.

on memory. In Argentina, aided by public opinion, new freely elected leaders succeeded in prosecuting hundreds of military officials involved in crimes against humanity. Though many of the convicted were later pardoned and retried, national memory has largely congealed around narratives of victimhood and resistance, fostered by a strong democracy whose participants resisted the dictatorship.<sup>51</sup> Chile, on the other hand, saw some failures of memory not unlike Spain. There, a Pinochet-designed Constitution and amnesty laws continue to protect gross human rights abusers. Several sweeping government-backed commissions, museums, and archives did, however, made public these abuses and fostered the historical memory of dictatorship. The first democratic elections in 1989 also brought about aggressive action by President Aylwin to expose human rights abuses by the military, even if those responsible could not be prosecuted, in contrast to the Spanish approach.<sup>52</sup>

Trends of historical memory in other post-authoritarian states show Spain to be a notable outlier. Unlike in other nations, Spain's institutions and political parties pursued a deliberate shirking of memory and maintained an official silence on the events of the civil war and dictatorship that lasted for three decades after transition. In doing so, successive governments deferred the typical state interest in shaping and exploring national memory. While other nations pursued explicit or implicit memory policies along paths of justice, education, remembrance, or speech, Spain did not. The nature of the respective transitions and which actors held influence may best explain this. The aforementioned nations were subject to military dictatorships that were either foreign imposed and then overthrown, or lost power due to widespread public resistance. In Spain, and to a lesser extent in Chile, where militaries still held significant sway,

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<sup>51</sup> Delgado, A. (2013). *Scholar Commons Memory and Truth in Human Rights: The Argentina Case. The Issue of Truth and Memory in the Aftermath of Gross Human Rights Violations in Argentina.*

<sup>52</sup> Vasallo, M. (2002). Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: General Considerations and a Critical Comparison of the Commissions of Chile and El Salvador. *The University of Miami Inter-American Law Review*, 33(1), 153–182.

held roles in transition, and where change was most precarious, historical memory was also most sidelined.

### *LEGACIES OF TERRORISM*

For Spain, the memory of terrorism represents a variant within national memory, one whose history has not been ignored by political parties or government authority. Most notably, terrorism, unlike other topics, has been a subject aggressively explored and discussed by conservative elements of Spanish society. Until the early 2000s the “reconciliation paradigm” remained the approach of virtually all political parties, the idea that for the horrors of the civil war and dictatorship “both sides were responsible and there were no winners and losers, but only shared guilt.”<sup>53</sup> PP and other conservative parties have not strayed from this line of thinking, but have always treated terrorism as a caveat, the exception to silence on historical memory or even a counterpoint to the memory of others.

Recent terrorism in Spain has been defined by two overlapping periods. First, the radical separatist terrorism of ETA and their right-wing opponents from the 1960s into the early 2000s, then radical Islamic terrorism from the 2000s to the present. Advocacy groups quickly formed for victims of attacks, starting in the 1980s with those connected to the conflict in the Basque country. Most, but not all, of these memory organizations had ties to prominent conservative parties or movements. For the right, remembering terrorism became politically valuable, especially in the 1990s, when Aznar and the PP campaigned hard on law-and-order policies.<sup>54</sup> Invoking terrorism also served to delegitimize independence movements, especially in the

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<sup>53</sup> Heath-Kelly, C., & Fernández de Mosteyrín, L. (2020). The political use of victimhood: Spanish collective memory of ETA through the war on terror paradigm. *Review of International Studies*, 1–18.

<sup>54</sup> Barberet, R. & Fominaya, B. (2018). The right to commemoration and “ideal victims”: the puzzle of victim dissatisfaction with State-led commemoration after 9/11 and 3/11, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 11:2, 219-242.

Basque country, politically connecting them to lawlessness and violence. Using the memory of terrorist actions consequently became advantageous, supporting key conservative positions against regional autonomy and civil disorder.<sup>55</sup>

Heath-Kelly and de Mosteyrín argue that narratives, especially on the right, have sought to “flatten” terrorism in Spain, intentionally ignoring the distinctions between its different forms and motivations, painting all terrorist activity as fanatical, unprovoked, and apolitical. The apoliticization of terrorism, especially within the Basque context, has been a frequent criticism of official memory narratives promoted by forces in Madrid.<sup>56</sup> In particular, when concerning ETA, whose creation as a multifaceted organization with antifascist origins is often ignored to instead portray it as a cult-like entity motivated by little more than bloodlust. The authors argue that for some within the Spanish right, memorializing terrorism in this manner presents a convenient scapegoat for the state violence and abuses during the dictatorship and early years of the transition. By contrasting the order and prosperity of Franco’s Spain and its successor state with the fruitless brutality and extremity of terrorist actions, the memory of terrorism can be used as “apologies for totalitarianism.” This contextualization relies on an intentional ignorance to the larger circumstance, that modern Spanish terrorism was hardly monopolized by groups like ETA and Al-Qaeda, but also served as a tool of the Francoist state itself.<sup>57</sup>

One instance of this weaponization of historical memory as connected to terrorism appears in the form of the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Center, a controversial state-sponsored museum analyzed by Heath-Kelly and de Mosteyrín. The center opened in Vitoria-Gasteiz in

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<sup>55</sup> Sanz, A. T., & Rivas Otero, J. (2018). Leadership Styles and War and Peace Policies in the Spanish–Basque Conflict: A Discourse Analysis of José María Aznar and José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. *Social Sciences*, 7(4), 68. MDPI AG.

<sup>56</sup> Baker-Beall, C., Heath-Kelly, C., & Jarvis, L. (2015). *Counter-Radicalisation: Critical Perspectives*. Taylor & Francis.

<sup>57</sup> Heath-Kelly, C., & Fernández de Mosteyrín, L. The political use of victimhood.

2021, only steps from the Basque parliament (a symbolism lost on few), based on a 2011 memory law passed by the PP.<sup>58</sup> The irony of the PP funding a museum concerning the historical memory of terrorism, while refusing any law relating to similar institutions memorializing the civil war and dictatorship, was quickly pointed out by its critics. Serving as Europe's sole non-specific museum to terrorism, it has encountered significant criticism from both scholars and the public, with critics claiming its presentation of events is little more than propaganda.

While the museum tries to display the carnage of radicalism, terrorism, and human rights abuses, its presentation has been labeled as “schizophrenic” and based on “mental gymnastics.” Notably absent from a museum dedicated to terrorism and violence in Spain is any mention of Franco or the staggering crimes of his regime. Instead, the center bizarrely equates the terrorism of ETA and that of Al-Qaeda, spinning historical connections that makes little sense. The exhibits also strangely focus on the Holocaust, which did not affect Spain, presenting Nazism and the ideology of ETA as deranged totalitarian bedfellows bent on destroying human rights. Observers highlighted the absurdity of comparing a antifascist paramilitary group which primarily targeted government officials to an industrial-scale genocide by a fascist state actor.<sup>59</sup> The outlandish use of Nazi Germany for narrative purposes was doubly ridiculous given that Spain had itself experienced fascism under an ally of Hitler, whose White Terror, contemporaneous with the Holocaust, is labelled by many historians as a genocide.<sup>60</sup> Several left-wing parties were indignant to these narrative choices, claiming the right had situationally abandoned its disinterest in historical memory to sponsor what was little more than revisionist, apologist propaganda.

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<sup>58</sup> Ley 29/2011, de 22 de septiembre, de Reconocimiento y Protección Integral a las Víctimas del Terrorismo., 1 (2011).

<sup>59</sup> Moreno Gómez, F. (2008). *1936: El Genocidio Franquista en Córdoba*. Grupo Planeta (GBS).

<sup>60</sup> Heath-Kelly, C., & Fernández de Mosteyrín, L, The political use of victimhood.

## METHODOLOGY

As historical memory has become a more prominent topic in Spanish society, political parties and governments have found themselves to be critical players. Individual parties tend to have highly variable approaches to the subject, based on ideology and historical background. The positions of these parties, and the governments they form, thus form a valuable perspective on how the wider public and political class address historical memory. By representing different cleavages within Spanish society, political parties additionally give insight into just how much memory varies within a nation.

The positions of differing parties regarding historical memory is best exemplified in their electoral manifestos. Issued before national elections by virtually all parties, manifestos state intent and party approach of the would-be representatives of voters. The length and structure of manifestos vary considerably, but tend to follow similar formats, usually broken into dozens of respective sections which address separate policy areas. In the most recent 2019 elections, the Unidas Podemos (UP) party released a manifesto totaling 252 pages while Basque Country Unite (EH Bildu) produced less than seven pages of text, while most other parties kept between about 40 and 100. While long-standing goals tend to be important to party manifestos, much of their focus tends to be on current developments: support or lack thereof for a government or law, noted accomplishments, and stances on hot button issues. Recent elections show historical memory to be one of these issues.

The Manifesto Project Database (MARPOR) allows for a systematic examination of the content of party manifestos. These manifestos are available for most parties that participated in free and fair post-war elections throughout the world, post-1975 Spain included. MARPOR breaks down the text of each manifesto into individual sentences or segments, each concerning a

distinct idea or topic. This separation of distinct ideas and points within larger blocks of text allows for easier analysis. With this, it is possible to identify what issues are addressed and with what frequency they are brought up. A typical manifesto will contain thousands of such segments, of which so many will be dedicated to memory, giving a numerical idea of the space dedicated to the subject. This research considers a segment as discussing historical memory if it falls into one of three categories. First, if it directly focuses on or mentions the memory of historical events taking place between 1936 and the transition. Second, if it was part of a manifesto section explicitly labeled as about historical memory.<sup>61</sup> Third, if it discussed memory policy, offering some sort of commentary on legal approaches to memory.

The following analysis uses the manifestos issued between elections of 2000 and those of November 2019. Parties were divided into two categories: regional parties, those whose priorities focus on a specific region, and national parties, those with broad pan-regional support and messaging. Manifestos from any party receiving 2% or more the nation-wide vote in any election in the timeframe were considered, a total of 34 manifestos representing six different parties. Because few regional parties receive such high support, any regional party which succeeded in electing a deputy to the Cortes General (Spain's lower house of parliament) in more than one election was also considered, this included 37 manifestos from seven parties. Regional parties which are simply localized forms of national parties were not taken into consideration.<sup>62</sup> In some rare cases, these manifestos are identical to a previous iteration, usually a case of re-release in snap election scenarios. Dual elections in both 2015 and 2019 sometimes led to this occurrence. In the case of the chaotic 2015 elections, the short-lived United Left (IU) dominated Popular

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<sup>61</sup> Dedicating a specific section of a manifesto to memory is a relatively recent phenomenon. PSOE is the notable party which has embraced this. The fact that historical memory is now a topic worthy of its own dedicated section is a sign of growing party interest in the topic.

<sup>62</sup> Some national parties do this, creating regional offshoots affiliated with the national party. The largest, the Socialists' Party of Catalonia is, for example, a branch of PSOE.



Unity (UP) alliance, which issued a group manifesto, was counted as a successor to the UP. Bar those instances, all national parties issued independent and non-repeating manifestos each election.

To explore the variety of topics invoked in party manifestos four themes of Spanish historical memory were investigated. Though not all segments in each manifesto concern one of these topics, they represent the most prominent topics of memory addressed across the last two decades. The first theme explores memory laws, the legislative efforts of parties to fight for or against government action regarding memory. The second considers the victims of the war and subsequent dictatorship. The third discusses the physical symbols of Franco's dictatorship such as monuments, public places, and his former mausoleum Valle de los Caídos. The fourth and final theme reviews the memory of terrorism in Spain, the most prominent theme. Together, these four themes serve as the dominant issues addressed by parties in their manifestos, outlining the topics within Spain's historical memory that are most important and polarizing.

**NATIONAL PARTIES**

<b>Abb.</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Founded</b>	<b>Partisanship</b>
IU	United Left	1986	Left / Far-left
UP	Podemos	2014	Left
PSOE	Socialist Party	1879	Center-left
Cs	Ciudadanos	2005	Center / Center-right
PP	People's Party	1989	Center-right
-	Vox	2013	Right / Far-right

**REGIONAL PARTIES**

<b>Abb.</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Founded</b>	<b>Partisanship</b>	<b>Region</b>
EH Bildu	Basque Country Unite	2011	Left / Far-left	Basque Country
ERC	Republican Left of Catalonia	1931	Center-left	Catalonia
-	Asturias Forum	2011	Center	Asturias
PNV	Basque Nationalist Party	1895	Center	Basque Country
-	Canarian Coalition	1993	Center / Center-right	Canary Islands
CiU	Convergence & Union	1978-2015	Center / Center-right	Catalonia
Junts	Together for Catalonia	2018	Center / Center-right	Catalonia

*Figure 1. An overview of major political parties in Spain active since the election of 2000.*

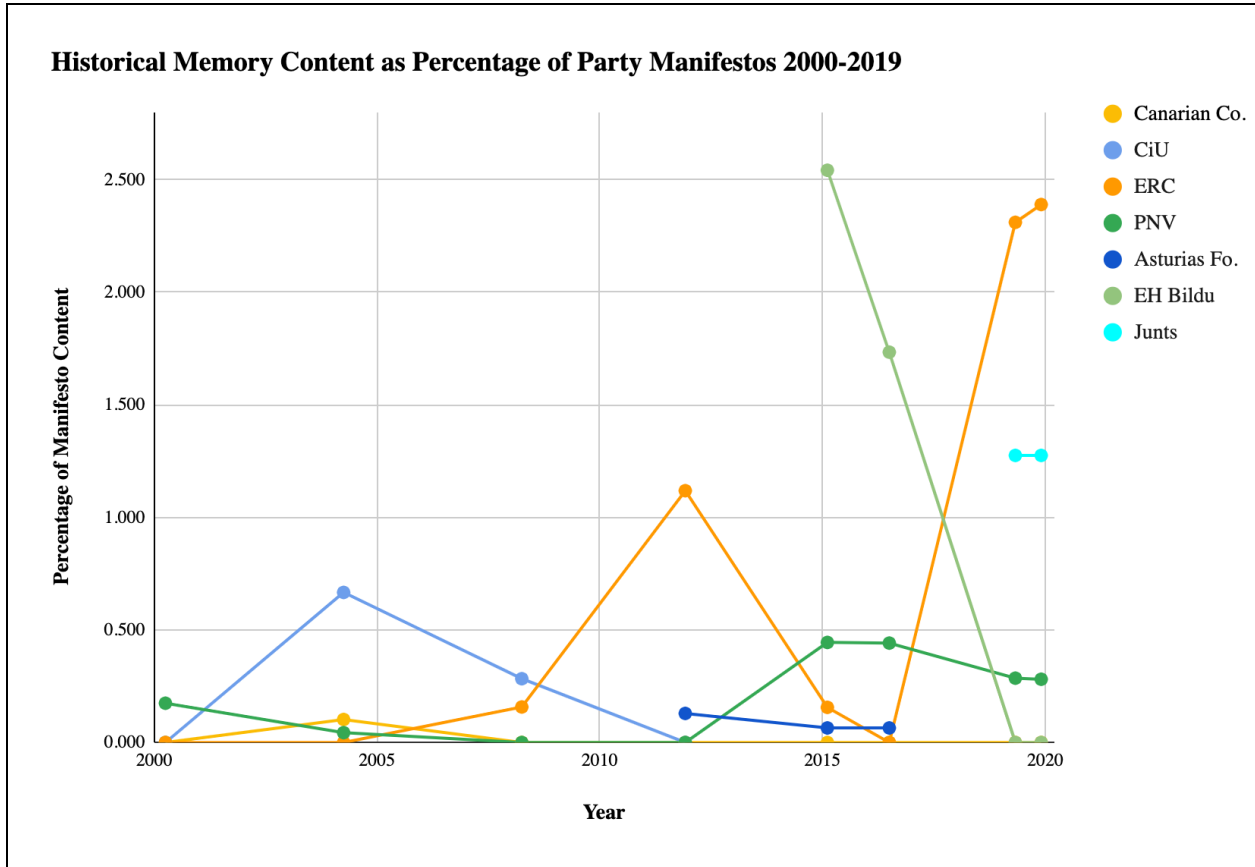
**RESULTS**

Data from the manifestos produced between the elections of March 2000 and November 2019 supports two different conclusions relating to party focus on issues of historical memory in manifestos. First, there is little identifiable trend in the case of the regional parties, with their coverage of the issue in manifestos being limited and variable, despite many having strong opinions about memory. On the other hand, national parties have consistently shown a growing

interest in historical memory as seen by increases in both the amount of space dedicated to the topic, and the complexity of issues discussed. The following charts and tables present a simple overview, using the segments provided by the Manifesto Project Database to determine what percentage each document relates to historical memory. Further sections will discuss this data in the context of the individual parties or their partisan leanings.

Regional parties do not uniformly share an interest in memory. Two of the parties surveyed, the Canarian Coalition and CiU, effectively avoided the issue entirely. Regional party manifestos, by and large, tend to be shorter, less comprehensive, and are more likely to reuse previous writing than their national counterparts. This is not to say they do not produce manifestos, all consistently do, but their complexity is not always on par with that exhibited in manifestos by more established and larger national parties. Given that regional party bases are small and tend to be based in strict regional boundaries, the issues they focus on tend to be highly local. Though national political issues play a role, parties are equally likely to dedicate space to more niche issues like regional taxes, tourism, and specific local infrastructure projects. Manifestos from the Canarian Coalition, for example, do not address historical memory, but do always leave space to discuss the status of local UNESCO World Heritage sites.

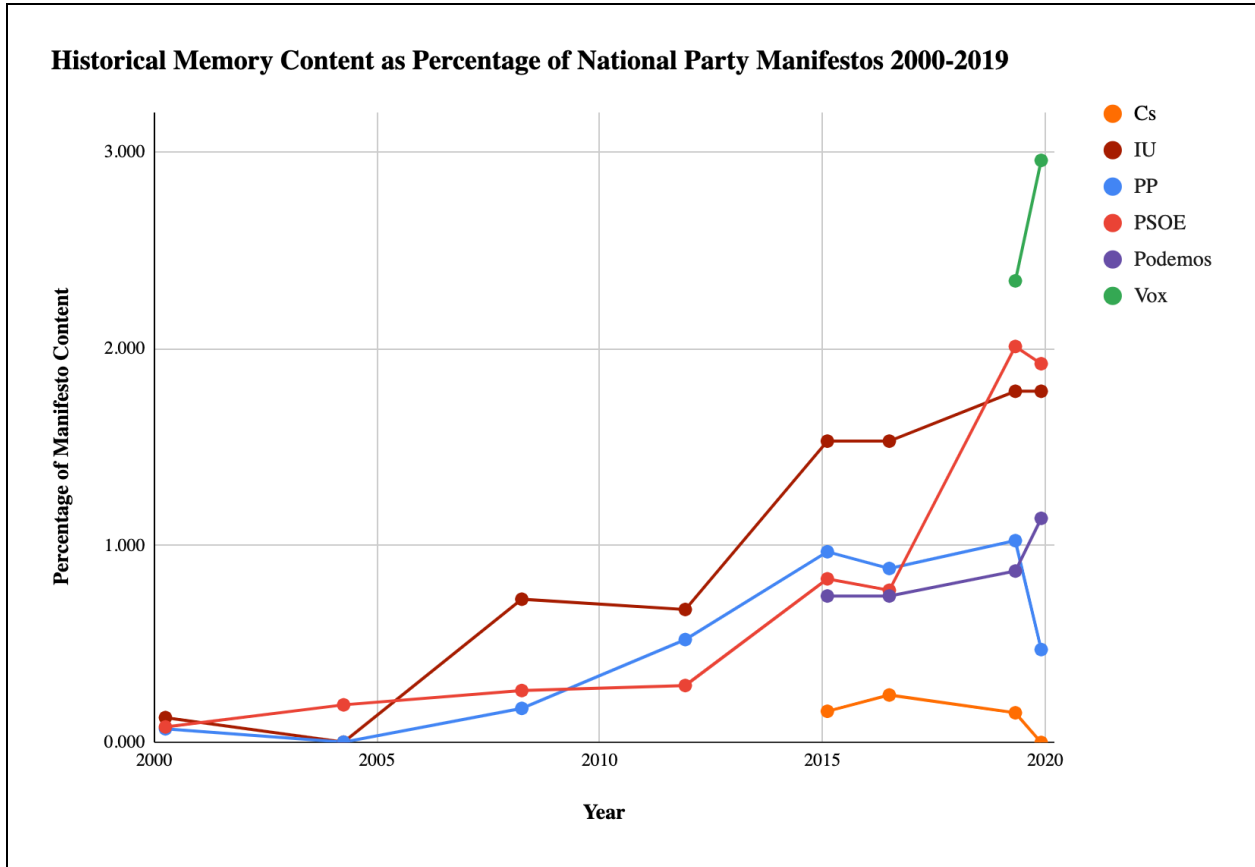
In 2000, regional parties dedicated an average of .04% of manifesto content to memory, while elections in 2019 saw that number increase to .8%. However, this change appears to not have to do with a broad increase in the discussion of memory but with two other factors. First, distortions in the outlook caused by the constant rise and fall of these small parties. Second, that actual increases in memory content over the period has largely been exclusively isolated to left-wing Catalan parties (see pg. 38). The most a regional party has dedicated to the topic in a manifesto came in 2015 with EH Bildu, at 2.5%, but this number is deceptive because



*Figure 2. The percent of manifestos dedicated to historical memory for regional parties during the period, the number of segments on memory divided by the total number of segments in each document.*

the party tends to release unusually short manifestos, including that year. Even with parties that discussed memory, the amount they dedicated varied noticeably year on year. The ERC went from 1.1% to .16% to 0% to 2.3% between the elections of 2011 and 2019, underlining the lack of clear momentum concerning memory. Subsequent sections break down this habit of regional party manifestos further.

Data from the manifestos of national parties produced a different picture of historical memory discourse. Apart from the centrist Cs, all parties saw significant increases in content between their first manifesto and their most recent in the November 2019 elections. For PSOE, from .08% to 1.9%, for PP, from .07% to .5%, a pattern found with all other left and right-wing



**Figure 3.** The percent of manifestos dedicated to historical memory for national parties during the period, the number of segments on memory divided by the total number of segments in each document. IU did not produce new manifestos for the second elections of 2015 or 2019.

parties. These numbers have increased year on year, with only Cs and PP ever seeing significant declines in percentage between elections. The far-right Vox produced the manifesto with the largest share dedicated to historical memory, almost 3%, in the most recent election. However, like its political nemesis EH Bildu, it tends to produce brief, albeit fiery, manifestos. Overall, the average percent of content dedicated to memory jumped from a negligible .1% in 2000 to 1.4% in November 2019, symptomatic of a wide increase in memory rhetoric.

National party manifestos also showcase a depth of discussion on memory that is generally lacking in the rhetoric of their regional counterparts. While many regional manifestos

discuss historical memory in narrow contexts related to memory laws or events, national parties tend to present more articulate and comprehensive visions for how Spain should address its past. PSOE, UP, IU, Vox, and the Cs, have all, at some point, given voters well fleshed out positions on historical memory and overviews of their stances on specific themes of the issue within their manifestos. All these parties have used their manifestos to discuss the legacy of the civil war, memory laws, Valle de los Caídos, and other specifics lacking in most regional content. The following sections examine these positions, the parties which hold them, and how they have contributed to historical memory in Spain.

### *NATIONAL PARTIES*

Looming large over the political dialogue surrounding historical memory of Spain are the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and the People's Party (PP). These twin juggernauts have together dominated the landscape of post-transition national politics. Of the 15 free elections since the death of Franco, 13 have seen the election of PP or PSOE governments, and all elections have seen one as the primary opposition party. Until 2015, both parties typically netted three-quarters of all votes cast, if not more. The strength of these parties, both historically and contemporarily makes them the key anchors and architects of memory policy and primary players in memory discourse. No other parties command the comparable electoral clout, and none have been more intimately involved in shaping the memory of the nation.

PSOE, long the standard-bearer of the Spanish center-left, traces its origins to union and labor movements in the closing decades of the 19th century. The nation's oldest active political party, it was created in 1879 amid tempestuous circumstances as Spain suffered endemic revolutions, coups, and social unrest. Synonymous with industrial action, by the Second

Republic PSOE was the largest left-wing party in the nation.<sup>63</sup> Ideologically influenced by the rise of the Soviet Union and the socialist revolutions which swept Europe after World War I, its leaders would be key players in the Republican faction of the Civil War.<sup>64</sup> The war lost and its followers persecuted, the party leadership fled into exile in the south of France, unsuccessfully trying to control elements left behind. In 1974, the party elected a charismatic young reformist to lead it, Felipe González. Influenced by mainstream socialist parties like the German SPD and British Labour, González would lead the party away from its Marxist past.<sup>65</sup> Eight years later, he led the party to the largest electoral landslide in Spanish history, beginning an age of PSOE rule which lasted until 1996.<sup>66</sup>

The younger of the two parties, the PP's roots lie in the other side of the Civil War. Starting life as the People's Alliance (AP), a collection of proto-Francoist parties under the leadership of Manuel Fraga who contested in the first free elections. Fraga had been instrumental in the transition and one of the writers of Spain's constitution, but had also been a key figure in the fallen dictatorship, serving in several prominent positions.<sup>67</sup> Badly misjudging public opinion, Fraga and the AP were initially shunned at the polls by voters suspicious of their clear relationship to Francoism.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, by the 1980s, the AP found themselves the second largest party in the country, adopting more moderate policies and falling into line with mainstream Christian democratic parties elsewhere on the continent. Unable to beat González

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<sup>63</sup> Robles Egea, A. (2015). Las Coaliciones de Izquierdas en Francia y España (1899-1939). *Cahiers de Civilisation Espagnole Contemporaine. De 1808 Au Temps Présent*, 2.

<sup>64</sup> Graham, H. (1988). The Spanish Socialist Party in Power and the Government of Juan Negrín, 1937-9. *European History Quarterly*, 18(2), 175–206.

<sup>65</sup> Gillespie, R. (1992). *Factionalism in the Spanish Socialist Party*. University of Warwick.

<sup>66</sup> Marcus, J. (1983). The Triumph of Spanish Socialism: The 1982 Election. *West European Politics*, 6, 1983(3).

<sup>67</sup> Sánchez-Prieto, J. M., & Guillermo, Z. (2016). "The Fear of a "Change Out of Control": Fraga's Failed Turn during the Spanish Transition. *Revista de Estudios Políticos*.

<sup>68</sup> Navajas Zubeldia, C., & Iturriaga Barco, D. (2014). *España en democracia: Actas del IV Congreso de Historia de Nuestro Tiempo* (p. pp. 9–25). Universidad de La Rioja.

and hampered by internal conflict, Fraga stepped down and in 1987 the party was rechristened as the People's Party, absorbing several smaller conservative parties. Two years later, Fraga engineered the election of a rising regional President, José Aznar, to the leadership of the party. It would be under Aznar that conservatives would finally return to power in Madrid.<sup>69</sup>

As the de facto leaders of the Spanish left for a near century, including during the dictatorship and transition, PSOE has an extraordinary influence over the historical memory of Spain. Via legislation, public rhetoric and influence, PSOE has been instrumental in crafting much of the modern landscape of memory. However, when their landslide victory brought González to power in 1982, historical memory was not a major subject for the party. With the army recovering from neo-fascist mutiny, pressing economic and social issues, and a constitutional order whose fragility was obvious, historical memory was a topic few wanted to address. The sweeping changes brought to Spain by 14 years of PSOE rule would not see interest in memory from major parties. The first public conversations on public memory led by the party would come about in the first years of the 21st century, under a new leader, Zapatero. Electoral manifestos in 2000 and 2004 would make only vague references to memory, arguing that crime and gang violence was connected to and inspired by past fascist ideologies. Like the PP, against the backdrop of perpetual conflict with ETA and the War on Terror, the memory of terrorism served as the primary focus.<sup>70,71</sup>

Brought into power in 2004, Zapatero and the PSOE used their electoral mandate to pass the Historical Memory Law, a major shift in the long-held tradition of deliberate ignorance to

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<sup>69</sup> Jansen, T., & Van Hecke, S. (2014). At Europe's Service: The Origins and Evolution of the European People's Party. In *SpringerLink*. Springer Berlin Heidelberg.

<sup>70</sup> Partido Socialista Obrero Español (2000). *Programa Electoral, Elecciones Generales 2000*. Partido Socialista Obrero Español, Madrid.

<sup>71</sup> Partido Socialista Obrero Español (2004). *Programa Electoral, Elecciones Generales 2004*. Partido Socialista Obrero Español, Madrid.



memory that had governed Spanish political life. When enacted in 2007, it represented the first law of its kind in the nation (see pg. 44). All other laws concerning memory since then have also been written and passed by the party. Though many of these actions have involved cooperation with smaller regional or left-wing parties, PSOE stands as the primary political architect of national memory policy. The 2022 Democratic Memory Law, decision to remove Franco from Valle de los Caídos, and virtually all memory related government efforts that have been pursued come from PSOE policy.

Of the parties producing manifestos in the last five Spanish elections, PSOE's tend to be the most comprehensive in covering historical memory. Though it dedicates quantitatively less space to the subject than some other parties, recent manifestos contain dedicated subsections for historical memory and aggressively cover pertinent issues within larger discussions of the topic. They state that discussing and addressing historical memory is a "moral progression in the political life of a people and a sign of the quality of its democracy," one they intend to lead.<sup>72</sup> All PSOE manifestos since 2011 have defended their work on the 2007 law or called for its expansion, while dedicating considerable space to discussing the victims of Francoism. Manifestos issued in 2019 also reiterated their desire to exhume Franco, a promise they fulfilled later that same year. While in the election of 2000 the party dedicated a mere .08% of their manifesto to issues of historical memory, by the most recent elections in 2019 that number stood at 1.9%.

The party background of PSOE makes their pivot towards addressing historical memory unsurprising. As the preeminent pre- and post-war left-wing party, its connection to Republicanism and antifascism in Spain runs deep. Many in the party's modern base and

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<sup>72</sup> Partido Socialista Obrero Español (2011). *Programa Electoral, Elecciones Generales 2011*. Partido Socialista Obrero Español, Madrid.

leadership have direct familial, or at bare minimum ideological, connections to the victims of Franco's persecution. Made illegal under dictatorship, its leaders forced into exile or executed, its unions suppressed, the party's interest in revisiting past events with the restoration of democracy is acutely personal.

PSOE's coalition partner, Podemos (UP), the only other major national left-wing party in Spain, closely follows their positions on memory. Created in 2014 as an anti-austerity populist alternative to more traditional parties, it has used its manifestos to call for familiar proposals such as the removal of Franco from Valle de los Caídos, exhumation of mass graves, and tribunals. In their inaugural manifesto they wrote of historical memory as a "civil right," one ignored by past administrations.<sup>73</sup> As an ally of PSOE, they have since joined other left-wing parties in passing recent memory legislation.

The interest taken by PSOE and UP to address historical memory is contrasted with that of its longstanding rival, the PP. Since its reorganization, the party has largely ignored the issue with the notable exception of the memory of terrorism. Any other use of the political sphere to legislate on or discuss issues of memory has been unwaveringly against the wishes of the party. Though post-Fraga the party has conformed to the positions of typical European Christian democratic parties, its Francoist origin is undeniable and places it in an awkward position when remembering the past. The modern PP is not ideologically fascist or Francoist, but its base of public support relies on the elements historically supportive of the Nationalist cause: Catholic hardliners, conservatives, the middle and upper classes, and ruralites. Compared to their PSOE counterparts, recent elections show PP voters still fit this trend, being wealthier, more likely to live in rural areas, and more religious than the average Spaniard.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Podemos (2015). *Un Programa para Cambiar Nuestro País*. Podemos, Madrid.

<sup>74</sup> Sánchez, R. (2019, November 10). *La demografía del 10N: así vota cada grupo social en las elecciones*

Of the manifestos issued by the PP since 2000, none have mentioned the historical memory of the civil war, dictatorship, or transition. They are thus the only major non-regional political party to have not raised the issue in a manifesto. Instead, any discussion of memory is limited to the memory of terrorism. PP manifestos frequently reference the need for legislation, archives, museums, and memorials to the memory of terrorism, not unlike their PSOE counterparts do for victims of Francoism. Initially, PP manifestos focused on nationalist terrorism, referencing the plots of ETA. However, with the end of armed separatist activity in the Basque country, Islamist terror attacks in Europe, and Spanish participation in the War on Terror, this rhetoric has shifted towards remembering victims of Islamic terrorism. In the case of the 2004 elections, this use of terrorism in party messaging proved to have severe consequences, inadvertently tying the PP to an unpopular war in Iraq and recent terrorist attacks, helping secure a come-from-behind victory for PSOE.<sup>75</sup>

The PP has unflatteringly criticized PSOE positions on historical memory, suggesting that their rival's interest in memory is less about justice and more about self-interested maneuvering, weaponizing touchy subjects within the national zeitgeist for political gain. It has labeled this alleged tendency of the left as the “joker of Franco,” a tactic it believes threatens to “dynamite the accords of the transition.”<sup>76</sup> The PP has repeatedly promised to repeal laws related to historical memory passed by PSOE but has balked at doing so beyond budgetary meddling, even when in power. For the party, repealing such laws is likely politically dangerous, risking unnecessary controversy over an issue it prefers to ignore.<sup>77</sup> This unclear resistance underlines

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*generales*. ElDiario.es.

<sup>75</sup> Colomer, J. (2005). The general election in Spain, March 2004. *Electoral Studies*, 25(1), 123–160.

<sup>76</sup> García de Blas, E. (2021, November 18). *El PP cree que juzgar los crímenes de la dictadura “dynamita los acuerdos de la Transición.”* El País.

<sup>77</sup> Riveiro, A. (2022, October 15). *La Memoria Democrática tampoco cabe en el PP de Feijóo*. ElDiario.es.

the motives of the center-right, that resisting against memory discourse is not about defending the memory of Franco, but preserving the amnesia of the transition.

### *REGIONAL PARTIES*

Compared to their national counterparts, regional parties tend to place less emphasis on historical memory. This is reflected in manifestos and rhetoric, with some notable exceptions among left-wing regional parties. Paradoxically, regional parties are often willing to vote for and support memory laws and other reforms when given the opportunity in government, even if not necessarily part of their platforms. However, due to their unique regional backgrounds, their place in memory discourse is often variable from election to election and in many cases virtually nonexistent. Constrained by smaller bases and dedicated to representing smaller sections of the nation, memory does not appear as a major issue for these parties.

Spain boasts an impressive number of regional parties at the federal level. Elections in November of 2019 brought record numbers into both chambers of parliament, representing 16 regional parties from across the nation. Though some of these parties are pro-independence for their respective Autonomous Communities, most are dedicated to regional representation and seek to protect local identity, language, and rights while staying part of the larger nation. All such parties are, by their nature, geographically limited to a primary Autonomous Community or even province, and thus relatively small bases of support.<sup>78</sup> For example, Teruel Existe, a party which won its first seat in the most recent election, runs candidates exclusively in a province with a total voting population of only 107,000.

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<sup>78</sup> The two Basque parties, EH Bildu and PNV, are somewhat of an exception. Both have long performed well in the historically Basque regions of neighboring Navarre with Basque identifying populations.

Of the parties surveyed, the Canarian Coalition made the least references to historical memory in their manifestos. Aside from a brief reference to historical memory as it relates to terrorism in a single manifesto the party has stayed silent on the issue. The long-standing big-tent party on the Canary Islands, it has suffered declining results for years and tends to emphasize local issues inherent to one of the most isolated parts of the nation. How such a party would benefit from invoking historical memory is unclear.

A similar trend appears in the cases of other regional parties outside of Catalonia. Asturias Forum, Basque Country Gather (EH Bildu), and Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), all enduring parties from smaller northern regions, also tend to address the issue inconsistently. They do confront it in some years, but not at the frequency or depth that their national counterparts do. Asturias Forum has discussed terrorism and briefly spoke against the 2005 transfer of the Salamanca Papers, the controversial decision to return civil war documents stolen by Francoist forces from Catalonia to the Catalan state.<sup>79</sup> The party argued against this transfer of historical memory material, despite the conflict being about the rights of regional governments to their property and heritage. This viewpoint may be informed less by their regional status but as a traditionally right-wing party closely associated with the PP, who held and continues to hold the same views.<sup>80</sup>

Both major Basque parties have been involved in prominent discussions on historical memory in Spain, but their manifestos are relatively lax on the topic. Both have discussed the memory of terrorism, a prominent issue in the region given ETA, but have abandoned the issue since the dissolution of the terror group. PNV questioned amnesty laws in 2000, affirmed their

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<sup>79</sup> Behzadi, E. (2020). *Spain for the Spaniards": An Examination of the Plunder & Polemic Restitution of the Salamanca Papers.*

<sup>80</sup> Ordóñez, J. A. (2011, May 25). *Cascos llama a PSOE, PP e IU a un "consenso básico", inspirado en los pactos de la Moncloa.* La Nueva España.

support for the Historical Memory Law in 2015 and has recently consistently raised the issues surrounding victims of Franco. However, historical memory has never taken up more than .44% of a manifesto, and their rhetoric remains centered on local issues. EH Bildu has yet to bring up any of these issues in their brief manifestos.

The paradox of both PNV and EH Bildu's lack of content dedicated to memory in manifestos is that both parties have been consistent supporters of memory legislation. PNV supported the 2007 Historical Memory Law and the follow-up 2022 Democratic Memory Law, championing the passages of both.<sup>81</sup> They have also successfully fought for the return of documents looted by Francoist troops to the Basque country and overseen the renaming of topography celebrating the dictatorship. EH Bildu, meanwhile, proved an important player in the passage of the 2022 law, and has long been outspoken in its criticism of what it views as apologist narratives such as those of the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Center.<sup>82</sup> Yet, their manifestos rarely reflect what is a clear willingness to address the topic. Instead, as seen in other regional parties, they tend to stress local or bread-and-butter issues that speak specifically to their respective regions. Historical memory, and other more national issues, such as the military and foreign policy, giving way to discussions about bridges, historic sites, taxes, and provincial fisheries.

Of the seven parties surveyed, three came from the Autonomous Community of Catalonia. Bolstered by a strong national identity and a large population (16% of the nation), the majority of regional seats in the national legislature represent the region. Catalan parties, both on the left and right, tend to be vocal on issues of historical memory, addressing the subject and

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<sup>81</sup> Gorriarán, R. (2007, November). *El Congreso aprueba la Ley de Memoria Histórica con los votos en contra de PP y ERC*. El Diario Vasco.

<sup>82</sup> Esteve, M. (2022, June 29). *EH Bildu saves the Spanish government's historical memory bill*. Ara; Ara in English.

using it to push nationalist causes in a way that regional parties from other areas do not. Recent events in the region have increased focus on memory for these parties as they look to the past to contextualize modern conflict with the national government.

The center-right CiU was the first Catalan group to raise historical memory in a manifesto, doing so in 2004, dedicating .7% of their manifesto, more than any other party that year. Like with PNV, they expressed support for the return of archives and legislation to address the victims of the war and dictatorship. A year later, many of these concerns were addressed in the 2005 law which they helped pass. Dogged by internal divisions over Catalan independence, CiU ceased to exist in 2011.<sup>83</sup> That same year, CiU's longtime left-wing collaborator, ERC, outlined a string of proposals including the exhumation of Valle de los Caídos, new museums and archives dedicated to the Republic, the annulment of Francoist court rulings, and further memory legislation. These proposals came on the heels of the Historical Memory Law, which it voted against, not because it disapproved of its content, but because it believed it did not go far enough.<sup>84</sup>

ERC's interest in historical memory is unsurprising given it, like PSOE, fought on the Republican side of the war. Founded in 1931, it governed Catalonia during the civil war and opposed the Nationalist coup. After the war, Franco banned the party, had its leaders executed, and stripped the region of all autonomy.<sup>85</sup> The fascist regime then began a systematic repression of Catalan culture that saw the banning of virtually any expression of Catalan language and

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<sup>83</sup> March, O. (2015, June 18). *Convergència enterra la federació: "El projecte polític de CiU s'ha acabat i cal una separació amistosa."* Ara.cat; Ara.

<sup>84</sup> Gorriarán, R, *El Congreso aprueba la Ley de Memoria Histórica con los votos en contra de PP y ERC.*

<sup>85</sup> Preston, P. (2012). *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain.* W. W. Norton & Company.

history, which it outlandishly connected to fantastical omnipresent Judeo-Masonic plots.<sup>86</sup>

The interest in historical memory taken by Catalan parties is closely tied to this 20th century history, their rhetoric often explicitly referencing regional events during the period. While most parties, national or regional, frame historical memory at a national level, Catalan parties often focus on incidents in memory concerning Catalonia. ERC has done this in calling for the annulment of Francoist rulings against Catalan politicians, calling for memory museums in the region, and recognition of and the return of honors for Lluís Companys. A founder of the ERC and leader of Catalonia during the civil war, Companys was murdered by the dictatorship with aid from the Gestapo.<sup>87</sup>

Catalan parties have also employed historical memory in discussing recent pushes for independence. By comparing the treatment of Catalonia by the modern Spanish state to its Francoist predecessor, claiming the institutions and policies that they allege oppress their nation are continuous with those of the dictatorship. In 2017, following a controversial referendum, the Catalan government unilaterally declared independence from Spain, resulting in ongoing protests and the trial of the independence leaders.<sup>88</sup> The aggressive response to these illegal actions by the national government has fueled Catalan parties' rhetorical comparisons of Francoist and democratic Spain, framing the fight for independence as also a struggle against hated Francoism.

Manifestos produced by ERC and Together for Catalonia (Junts) in the elections of 2019 deployed this argument in favor of Catalan self-determination. The ERC wrote that “the constitutional regime inherited the entire political and economic structure of Francoism” and that

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<sup>86</sup> Llaudó Avila, E. (2021). *Racisme i supremacisme polítics a l'Espanya contemporània* (7th ed.). Parcir Edicions Selectes.

<sup>87</sup> Preston, P, *The Spanish Holocaust*.

<sup>88</sup> García Agustín, Ó. (2021). *Catalan Independence and the Crisis of Sovereignty*. Springer International Publishing, Imprint Palgrave Macmillan.



the Spanish democracy was only a “veneer.”<sup>89</sup> In the aftermath of Spanish courts intervening against attempted independence and the trial of prominent leaders, Junts claimed the judicial system had “assumed the transformation of the Francoist Court of Public Order,” the court used by the dictatorship to stifle political dissent. It also argued for the abolition of the monarchy, another vestige of Franco.<sup>90</sup> The point of such arguments is clear, a framing of the central Spanish government as an undemocratic aggressor, unchanged in its approach towards Catalonia since the days of Franco. In this way, Catalan parties set themselves apart, using manifestos to communicate not only the historical memory of a particular region, but also utilizing memory to support its independence from Spain.

#### *FAR-RIGHT & FAR-LEFT PARTIES*

Far-right and far-left parties, operating on the fringe of Spanish politics, are often some of the most vocal when it comes to historical memory. Their outspokenness and the extreme nature of their beliefs makes them prominent in the discourse surrounding the issue, but their actual impact on policy is minimized by their status as smaller parties. Nonetheless, they represent perspectives in memory that may otherwise be ignored in more mainstream and moderate parties. The recent popularity of these parties, especially Vox, suggests that these perspectives hold some sway, with at least some voters willing to embrace the versions of history presented by the far-left and right.

Few parties have dedicated themselves to historical memory more than the far-right Vox. Founded by a splinter group of PP, who its founders believed to be too socially moderate, it is

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<sup>89</sup> Esquerra Republicana (2019). *Programa Eleccions de Generals 2019*. Esquerra Republicana, Barcelona.

<sup>90</sup> Junts per Catalunya (2008). *Programa Electoral - Eleccions al Congrés i al Senat - 10 N 2019*. Junts per Catalunya, Barcelona.

unique as the sole far-right party to achieve any tangible electoral success in post-Franco Spain. Capitalizing on the crisis in Catalonia, immigration issues, and Euroscepticism, it is now the third largest party in the national government. Though not overtly Francoist, its ultranationalism, xenophobia, and extremely traditionalist outlook closely resembles Francoism. Xidias labels its ideology as “sociological Francoism,” a modern whitewashing of the politics of the dictatorship.<sup>91</sup> Though it claims not to be fascist, the party has little to distance themselves from fascist legacies, its president once declaring the party “the voice of all those who had parents on the nationalist side.”<sup>92</sup>

Vox has only released manifestos for the twin 2019 elections, but neither have shied from discussing memory, dedicating 2.3% and 3% of the documents to the subject. Like other right-wing parties, familiar discourse surrounding terrorism is present. Where Vox diverges from PP and others is in its willingness to criticize the memory politics of the left. Both their manifestos state they would like to “immediately repeal the Law of Historical Memory.”<sup>93,94</sup> Vox further claims both it and the Democratic Memory Law are “totalitarian,” though what about them is totalitarian they do not explain.

Vox’s interest in historical memory is unsurprising given the narratives the party embraces. Vox has long framed their movement as fighting to return Spain to a more illustrious national past, a “reconquest” from hostile enemies like immigrants, feminists, socialists, and regionalists.<sup>95</sup> These “reconquest” narratives borrow heavily from the memory of the Reconquista, the centuries long battle to expel the Islamic kingdoms from Iberia which lasted

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<sup>91</sup> Xidias, J. (2021). *From Franco to Vox: Historical Memory and the Far Right in Spain*. Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right.

<sup>92</sup> Pan-Montojo, N. (2019, January 14). *Abascal cree que la memoria histórica es “un debate infecto.”* El País.

<sup>93</sup> Vox (2019). *Programa Electoral 28A 2019*. Vox, Madrid.

<sup>94</sup> Vox (2019). *Programa Electoral 10N 2019*. Vox, Madrid.

<sup>95</sup> Xidias, *From Franco to Vox: Historical Memory and the Far Right in Spain*.

until 1492, applying them to modern contexts. Franco's dictatorship also frequently referenced this history, painting its rule as part of a divine Christian battle against foreign evils. Vox's use of this same history, combined with its defense of the Nationalist cause, show a deliberate interest in using historical memory for political gain. Whether they continue to rise in the polls may suggest if such memories of crusading knights and Francoist glories hold traction with the public.

Spain's far-left has not enjoyed the levels of success of Vox. Its only electorally meaningful presence comes in the form of the United Left (IU), a federation of smaller far-left parties that have run together since the 1980s. Once the nation's third largest vote recipient, chronic failures at the polls have brought them into an alliance with PSOE and UP.<sup>96</sup> The IU itself has long been dominated by the Communist Party (PCE), a historic party who fought alongside PSOE and ERC on the Republican side of the civil war, and organized guerilla resistance to the dictatorship afterward.<sup>97</sup>

Like their left-wing allies who can directly link their heritage to the war, IU has been consistently vocal on issues of memory. Both their voting records and manifestos display a passion for the issue, dedicating no less than 1.5% of their manifestos to the topic since 2015. In collaboration with PSOE, they have had a hand in crafting key legislation, including the Historical Memory Law, which they call one of their "great accomplishments." The group has been a consistent fountainhead of proposals regarding memory, from creating a national institute for historical memory to a state holiday remembering the victims of Franco. They have also been a consistent advocate regarding mass graves since their 2000 manifesto, being the first to propose state financed exhumations, national databases, and judicial oversight and inquiry.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Carvajal, Á. (2016, May 12). *Las bases de IU aprueban por un 87,8% la coalición con Podemos*. El Mundo.

<sup>97</sup> Payne, S. (2011). *Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union, and Communism*. Yale University Press.

<sup>98</sup> Izquierda Unida (2008). *Programa Electoral de Izquierda Unida, Elecciones 2008*. Izquierda Unida, Madrid.

IU's positions on historical memory serve as effectively the exact opposites of its far-right nemesis Vox. Both parties pull from historical extremities within Spanish politics, closely tied to the memory of the civil war and dictatorship to a degree their moderate counterparts do not. Whether this discourse is valuable in winning widespread public support is uncertain. But its prevalence suggests it remains appealing to their voters, the more extreme elements of the electorate, for whom such memories remain very much alive.

### *MEMORY LAWS*

Nearly half of manifestos issued by Spanish parties in the period address the use of legislation dealing with historical memory of the civil war and dictatorship. On this topic, party positions tend to map closely onto ideological leanings, with left-wing parties supporting memory legislation and their right-wing counterparts opposing it. For the Spanish left, the legislative process represents a clear path to historical justice, long overdue and needed. In contrast, the right argues such laws are unnecessary, reopen old national wounds and overstretch government influence. This discourse has naturally focused on the only two major memory laws passed since the transition, the 2007 Historical Memory Law and the 2022 Democratic Memory Law.

The Historical Memory Law fulfilled the promises of the Zapatero administration to finally address memory after the elections of 2004. The law, crafted by PSOE and most parties save for PP, nullified the rulings of Francoist courts, opened state funding for the exhumation of mass graves, returned citizenship to exiles and the descendants, and reformed operations at war archives.<sup>99</sup> Zapatero would later speak of the law as a defense of “the right to personal and

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<sup>99</sup> Agencia Estatal Boletín Oficial del Estado. (2022). *BOE-A-2007-22296 Ley 52/2007, de 26 de diciembre, por la que se reconocen y amplían derechos y se establecen medidas en favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia durante la guerra civil y la dictadura.*

familial memory in the face of the history of suffering,” an important first step towards justice.<sup>100</sup> Praised by much of the left, the law nonetheless found critics on both the left and right. The ERC, another socialist party, voted against the law in protest, believing it had failed to go far enough, especially concerning mass graves. They labeled the law a “great fraud,” one which did too little to address the crimes of the dictatorship.<sup>101</sup> Other regional and left-wing parties, however, stood by the law.

Aside from the objections of ERC, most criticism of the law came from the right. The PP generally opposed the provisions of the law, repeatedly invoking the belief that Spain’s transition to and maintenance of democracy have only been possible by forgetting a painful shared past. They accused PSOE and its supporters of “dynamiting the agreements of the transition,” warning that rehashing the civil war could inflame sectarian and partisan differences smoothed by democratic order.<sup>102</sup> Returned to power in 2011, PP used their parliamentary majority to render much of the law’s implementation void by leaving it without funding. They did not, however, as many had predicted, repeal the law itself.<sup>103</sup> Instead, the party stuck to their traditional stance of non-engagement with memory laws, believing them too controversial and painful to address.

The parties that passed the 2007 law were quick to argue for further legislation which PSOE labeled a “work in progress.”<sup>104</sup> They would have to wait for PSOE to return to power in 2019, with the Democratic Memory Law of 2022 as the result. The law declared the dictatorship illegal, created a day of remembrance, recognized the victims of Francoist concentration camps,

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<sup>100</sup> Jiménez, J. (2021, July 8). *José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, sobre memoria histórica: “Fue una de las leyes que más expliqué al rey emérito.”* El Diario.

<sup>101</sup> Calvar, C. (2007, November 22). *ERC pedirá el veto en el Senado a la ley de Memoria Histórica.* Diario Sur; Diario Sur.

<sup>102</sup> García, E. (2021, November 18). *El PP cree que juzgar los crímenes de la dictadura “dinamita los acuerdos de la Transición”.* El País.

<sup>103</sup> ABC (2008, February 10). *Ni un euro público para las fosas de la guerra.* ABC.es; ABC.

<sup>104</sup> Partido Socialista Obrero Español (2011). *Programa Electoral, Elecciones Generales 2011.* Partido Socialista Obrero Español, Madrid.

finally financed exhumations, mandated schooling on the civil war, suppressed Francoist honors, and allowed for the government to alter Valle de los Caídos.<sup>105</sup> Like its predecessor, the law had its opponents on both sides. ERC and smaller left-wing parties again believed the law was too moderate, with the party saying the government’s memory law “continues to fall short,” especially regarding continued amnesty for crimes against humanity.<sup>106</sup>

Backlash to the law, fueled further by the exhumation of Franco, was swift from right-leaning parties and critics. Cs, PP, and Vox, all major national right-wing parties, vehemently opposed the law and its broadened scope. While the right had criticized the previous law as dangerous to the transition, it argued the newer law was authoritarian and gave the central government unprecedented influence over official historical memory. PP claimed the law was “neither memory nor democratic,” since the history it addressed was “selective,” and undemocratically dictated to local and regional authorities how to and what to remember.<sup>107</sup> Cs, who supported the 2007 law, also claimed its successor relied on “selective memory,” forced onto the Spanish people by government overreach. Both parties have threatened to repeal the law if given the opportunity.<sup>108</sup>

No party has been more vocally opposed to either historical memory law than Vox. They have focused heavily on the passage of the newer law, including in a histrionic, albeit futile, attempt to challenge its legality in the courts.<sup>109</sup> Vox’s leader Santiago Abascal proclaimed the

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<sup>105</sup> Agencia Estatal Boletín Oficial del Estado. (2022b). *BOE-A-2022-17470 Instrucción de 25 de octubre de 2022, de la Dirección General de Seguridad Jurídica y Fe Pública, sobre el derecho de opción a la nacionalidad española establecido en la disposición adicional octava de la Ley 20/2022, de 19 de octubre, de Memoria Democrática.*

<sup>106</sup> Borraz, M. (2022, July 14). *El Congreso aprueba la Ley de Memoria Democrática con la oposición de las derechas.* El Diario.

<sup>107</sup> infoLibre. (2022, July 9). *Feijóo asegura que derogará la Ley de Memoria: “En estas condiciones, ni es memoria ni es democrática.”* InfoLibre.

<sup>108</sup> Casillas Bayo, J. (2022, July 6). *Guillermo Díaz: “La Ley de Memoria Democrática es una puñalada del sanchismo al mejor PSOE.”* ABC; abc.es.

<sup>109</sup> Romero, P. (2023, January 13). *Vox vuelve a recurrir la ley de Memoria Democrática: “Es totalitaria y propia de las peores dictaduras.”* Abc; ABC.es.

“totalitarian” law was passed by “coupists, communists and terrorists” who wanted to “dictate collective memory.”<sup>110</sup> This understanding of events falls in line with existing political narratives pushed by Vox, that the authoritarian PSOE is destroying Spanish democracy, that EH Bildu is an illegal terrorist entity, and that national pride and identity are under attack. In the landscape of Spanish politics that the party depicts, the memory legislation of these parties is just the latest plot against the nation.

For Spain, the role of laws on memory laws have proved a political lightning rod. While most parties acknowledge the need to address at least some issues in memory, whether they be victims of war, terrorism, amnesty, or any other subject, overlap is fleeting. When parties do decide to answer questions of memory legislatively, partisan divisions make themselves clear. The United Nations and European Council have both expressed concerns over Spain’s failures to address historical memory and account for the actions of dictatorship, something PSOE and its allies now claim to be addressing.<sup>111,112</sup> The longevity of these laws, however, and whether they can survive contact with a right-wing government, remains to be seen.

### *VICTIMS OF WAR & DICTATORSHIP*

At the heart of much of the memory discourse in Spain is the human cost of the civil war and subsequent dictatorship. Party interest in memory is frequently based and focused on this aspect of shared history, tied to pushes for justice and remembrance. As in the case of the laws that try to tackle the subject, their addressal tends to depend on partisan leanings. Left-wing

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<sup>110</sup> Vox. (2023, January 13). *Abascal lamenta que la ley de Memoria Democrática pretenda deslegitimar el abrazo fraternal de los españoles y se compromete a derogarla - VOX*. Vox.

<sup>111</sup> UN News. (2018, July 25). *Proposal for Spain to reckon with its past during Franco era, welcomed by UN rights experts*. UN News; United Nations.

<sup>112</sup> Parliamentary Standing Committee. (2006). *Need for international condemnation of the Franco regime*. Coe.int; Council of Europe.

parties regularly address the theme in their manifestos and rhetoric, arguing for a duty to acknowledge the victims of war and state violence. Right-wing and centrist parties skirt the issue in their manifestos, believing that left-wing interest comes from partisan interests and does little to benefit the nation. Though no parties actively deny the atrocities and abuses of the period, some tend to shun the topic while others actively face it.

Historians have long struggled to accurately catalog crimes against humanity committed during the Spanish Civil War and Francoist dictatorship. Rampant butchery committed on both sides of the conflict, poor documentation, and censorship, combined with the sheer scale of abuses, have presented significant hurdles. Scholars tend to split abuses and human rights deaths into two periods. First, those of the war itself, carried out by both Nationalist and Republican forces between 1936 and 1939 which claimed the lives of some 380,000.<sup>113</sup> Second, those committed post-war by fascist forces as an extension of the preexisting White Terror, continuing until the transition, which led to some 75,000 to 200,000 additional deaths.<sup>114</sup> Mass executions, torture, forced labor, rape, and similar crimes were rampant under the dictatorship, especially immediately after the war. Unlike the abuses committed by Republican forces, Francoist terror was highly organized, and state sanctioned, part of what the regime saw as national cleansing.<sup>115</sup>

All national left-wing parties have dedicated considerable amounts of their manifestos to addressing victims of the period with PSOE, IU, and UP having discussed the issue in all manifestos issued since 2011. In the most recent election, of the sections dedicated to discussing memory, 40%, 45%, and 73% respectively were dedicated to victims. PSOE argues that addressing historical victims represents a “moral advance in the political life of a people and a

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<sup>113</sup> Clodfelter, M. (2017). *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Encyclopedia of Casualty and Other Figures, 1492-2015*. Mcfarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.

<sup>114</sup> Payne, S. (2013). *The Spanish Civil War*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>115</sup> Payne, S. (1973). *A History of Spain and Portugal Volume 2*. University of Wisconsin Press.



sign of the quality of its democracy,” a necessary step in Spain’s democratic journey.<sup>116</sup> PSOE and UP further argue that there is a governmental duty to put forward “actions of recognition and reparation for the victims of the civil war and the dictatorship.”<sup>117</sup> IU writes that ignoring past state abuses is itself a form of abuse, continuing the silencing of victims. They also point out that not addressing these victims violates international agreements the nation has made and European Union standards.<sup>118</sup>

Regional parties tend to share approaches to addressing victims of the period, with clear partisan divisions. As with other memory issues, right-wing parties like the Asturias Forum or Canarian Coalition do not address historical memory whatsoever. Of the two Basque parties, PNV regularly advocates for victims in their manifestos. While EH Bildu does as well, it does not do so in its manifestos. This is unsurprising, as both parties have been enduring supporters of memory issues and related legislation. Catalan parties are also vocal, regardless of partisan positions, including ERC, CiU, and JxCats. ERC writes that accounting for past atrocities should be one of the key “responsibilities of the Spanish state,” including those committed against the Catalan people. Parties from the region also invoke the memory of specific victims of Francoist terror, often that of President Companys and other murdered leaders.<sup>119</sup> Like with their national counterparts, ideological leanings shape how these parties confront the issue.

National parties on the right do not share the rhetorical enthusiasm of left-wing and regional parties regarding victims. Cs and PP both condemn Franco’s coup and the violence of the fascist regime but subscribe to the idea of shared guilt, as Heath-Kelly and de Mosteyrín noted, the inaccurate parity of Francoist and anti-Francoist violence. As found in the “Pact of

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<sup>116</sup> Partido Socialista Obrero Español. *Programa Electoral, Elecciones Generales 2011*.

<sup>117</sup> Partido Socialista Obrero Español. *Ahora, Progreso*.

<sup>118</sup> Izquierda Unida (2019). *Programa de IU para las Elecciones Generales de 10N 2019*. Izquierda Unida, Madrid.

<sup>119</sup> Esquerra Republicana. *Programa Eleccions de Generals 2019*.

Silence", both believe such discussions undermine democratic progress and reconciliation.<sup>120</sup> Vox is, characteristically, more militant in its outlook. This is no surprise given the party refuses to condemn the dictatorship and has been no stranger to controversy over its pseudo-Francoist positions. The party's hostility to the subject recently reared its head in rural Castilla y León, where it has unsuccessfully tried to use its control of the regional government to halt the exhumation of mass graves of war victims, a move other right-wing parties thought went too far.<sup>121</sup>

Like with the issue of memory laws, which remembering victims is closely associated with, partisan distinctions appear in how parties choose to confront victimhood. PSOE, IU, ERC, and other parties from both the national and regional left view the issue as a moral obligation. To them, acknowledging and seeking justice for victims of state violence is a responsibility of the government, and an overdue matter. For parties on the right, the subject is avoided in manifestos and policy. To center-right parties, as with so many memories of the period, left-wing interest in the matter is motivated by political gain and a desire to revisit memories of persecution. On the extreme end, the far-right appears ready to defend the legacies of the persecutors, their ideological forebears, from efforts to recognize their victims.

Given the scope of the abuses committed between 1936 and 1975, conversations about victims are unlikely to fade, even as there are dwindling survivors of the period. Left-wing parties and some of their regional allies will continue to memorialize and push for legal responses. Except for Vox, right-wing parties have set a course of non-engagement, fearing the divisiveness of such memories, though believing them capable of harm. This creates a paradoxical willingness to acknowledge victimhood and crimes against humanity met with an

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<sup>120</sup> RTVE (2021, July 21). *El PP condena "sin ambages" la dictadura franquista*. RTVE.es.

<sup>121</sup> Navarro, J. (2022, March 24). *Las asociaciones de Memoria Histórica de Castilla y León se rebelan contra las amenazas de Vox al decreto autonómico*. El País.

unwillingness to further move away from the norm of silence set in the transition by pursuing justice. In doing so, the right has created a self-fulfilling prophecy, an understanding of victimhood pursued by the left, because they themselves refuse to participate.

### *SYMBOLS OF FRANCOISM & VALLE DE LOS CAÍDOS*

One of the primary flashpoints surrounding historical memory in Spain has been the status of public symbols and sites celebrating the Francoist dictatorship. Like other European fascist regimes, Francoist Spain aggressively used the arts, design, and public spaces to exalt the regime. Using monuments, street names, public infrastructure, and megaprojects, the regime blanketed the nation in testaments to the state, its leader, and its heroic struggles against communism and anarchy. With democratization, these places of propaganda became controversial, places of quasi-pilgrimage and reverence for Franco's supporters and of national disgrace for detractors. Most controversial of all has been Valle de los Caídos, the enormous subterranean basilica-mausoleum built to house the remains of the civil war dead and Francoist leaders. As with other memory issues, left-wing parties have favored addressing the issue in the form of removing such symbols, while right-wing parties have opposed such measures.

Discourse and resulting action on the topic of Francoist symbology has been spearheaded by PSOE and its left-wing and regional political allies. One of the key features of the 2007 law passed by them was to empower authorities to specifically target and remove monuments, statues, street names, and other topographical features celebrating the dictatorship. Though there was pushback, local and regional authorities subsequently participated in the removal of hundreds of these symbolic objects and places.<sup>122</sup> The PP opposed these actions but did not

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<sup>122</sup> Marcos, J. (2013, November 20). *Izquierda Unida exige que se cumpla la Ley de Memoria Histórica en la región*. El País.

repeal the law. Instead, it was efforts by left-wing parties to extend the reach of these removals that provoked fierce backlash, chief among them the call to exhume Franco from los Caídos. IU was the first party to propose this, doing so in their 2008 manifesto.<sup>123</sup> Other left-wing parties subsequently threw their support behind the idea. PSOE wrote of exhuming Franco and his victims alike as a way of “advancing in the principle of recognition and reparation,” recognizing historical injustice as a nation.<sup>124</sup>

One year after the civil war ended, Franco ordered the construction of the enormous complex that would become Valle de los Caídos in the Guadarrama Mountains north of Madrid. His personal passion project, it took nearly two decades to complete, at enormous material and human costs, including the lives of many of the enslaved political prisoners used as labor.<sup>125</sup> The bodies of some 34,000 soldiers from both sides were encased in the structure itself, making it Spain’s largest mass grave. These were joined by the bodies of Primo de Rivera, the founder of fascism in Spain, and later Franco himself. Post-transition, the fact that the state was maintaining the sprawling tomb of the former dictator outraged the Spanish left, culminating in 2019 with the new PSOE government having Franco exhumed and reburied in a private cemetery against the wishes of his family.<sup>126</sup> Prime Minister Sánchez (PSOE) argued that in doing so the government had “put an end to a moral affront” against the nation, an assessment supported by Podemos, IU, PNV, EH Bildu, and Catalan parties.<sup>127</sup>

Backlash from right-wing parties over the reburial was swift. Cs and PP abstained from voting on the authorization of the exhumation, Vox voted against. Cs accused left-wing parties of

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<sup>123</sup> Izquierda Unida. *Programa Electoral de Izquierda Unida, Elecciones 2008*.

<sup>124</sup> Partido Socialista Obrero Español. *Ahora, Progreso*.

<sup>125</sup> Preston, P. (1994). *Franco: Caudillo de España*. Basic Books.

<sup>126</sup> Santaaulalia, I. (2019, October 24). *Mingorrubio, cuatro franquistas y un funeral*. El País.

<sup>127</sup> El País. (2018, September 13). *Sánchez: “España da un paso histórico. Hoy nuestra democracia es mejor.”* El País.

“playing with the bones” and using a body to win political points.<sup>128</sup> The PP’s spokesman claimed that the exhumation “does not contribute anything and is applied with the sole aim of dividing the Spanish people,” a familiar position for the party. To both parties, exhumation was a form of historical revisionism done with self-serving political purposes.<sup>129</sup> Vox vehemently opposed the move, their leader stating that it was part of a “socialist campaign” aimed at “desecrating graves.” They further alleged the reburial was also a facet of leftist a plot to overthrow a monarchy but, did not provide further details on how.<sup>130</sup>

For Spain, Valle de los Caídos represents a tangible *lieu de mémoire* whose existence and role in national memory will always make it polarizing. Franco designed los Caídos to be a place of collective memory, the specific memory that he and his regime worked to promote. Where a continuity with fascism could be established, where his victory in the war could be retold, and where a nation could come to understand a complex conflict congealed into the single narrative of the state. Even the thousands of bodies used as mortar represented this, the personal histories of nameless soldiers reduced into the concrete used to build the halls to hold the bodies of those whose stories mattered, Primo de Rivera and himself. Franco succeeded in making the valley a place of group contemplation and cultural formation. All political sides recognize this reality, whether on the far-right as a place of reverence or on the left as a place of shame. The fight is now whether such a site of memory should be allowed to continue to be so, and whether in altering such a place memory can be changed or justice established.

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<sup>128</sup> Público. (2019, September 24). *Vox menosprecia al Supremo y acusa al Gobierno de “profanar tumbas” y desenterrar “odios del pasado”*. Público.

<sup>129</sup> García de Blas, E. (2019, September 24). *El PP se pone de perfil ante la exhumación de Franco y Cs le resta importancia*. El País.

<sup>130</sup> Público. (2019, September 24). *Vox menosprecia al Supremo y acusa al Gobierno de “profanar tumbas” y desenterrar “odios del pasado”*.

How political parties choose to address symbols of Francoism, especially in the context of the exhumation and Valle de los Caídos, in their manifestos for the next elections remains to be seen. Left-wing parties will likely defend the decision, invoking previous efforts to remove tangible topography and propaganda associated with the dictatorship. Center-right parties are unlikely to address the issue, but Vox, outspoken in its opposition to virtually any action on memory, almost certainly will. Franco is unlikely to be returned to Valle de los Caídos, as doing so would provoke a firestorm beyond even that caused by removing him from the site. However, his exhumation will likely live on as a touchstone of memory discourse. As of October 2022, the valley will not even bear the name Franco bestowed it. Officials have rechristened it with its ancient name, Valle de Cuelgamuros.<sup>131</sup>

### *REMEMBERING TERRORISM*

How to remember and memorialize terrorism is the most frequent theme of manifesto content dedicated to historical memory. Unlike with other issues of memory, there is strong cross-party consensus that this issue is of importance and should be addressed by government authorities. Otherwise opposing parties tend to work in collaboration, willing to put aside differences to remember this specific aspect of Spanish history. Two-thirds of the manifestos from national parties discuss the issue, often nearly identically, though some parties on the political fringe have found far more partisan angles. Regional parties tend to be less vocal, focusing on local issues over security and terrorism policy unless it directly involves their region. Regardless, the existence of consensus as to how to address the topic makes terrorism a unique

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<sup>131</sup> Bartolomé, A. (2021, November 17). *El Valle de los Caídos cambiará su nombre por el original de Valle de Cuelgamuros*. Larazon.es; La Razón.

and unifying theme within a national memory that is otherwise divisive and prone to sectarianism.

Most major parties, including PP and PSOE (center-left and right), tend to take relatively straightforward and indistinct positions on how to remember terrorism. Condemning violence, arguing for aid to its victims, and advocating for remembrance are uncontroversial and simple talking points. PP writes of a national “moral duty to honor the memory and legacy of those whose lives were taken” by terrorism.<sup>132</sup> PSOE used part of their 2011 manifesto to argue that they had “deepened” efforts to memorialize and care for victims, pointing to monuments, new pensions, specialized education, and even housing policy. The party also claimed one of their goals in government was to “give the victims of terrorism the support and solidarity they deserve.”<sup>133</sup> Little identifiable political difference appears in such rhetoric, with there being no definitive difference in the opinions or approaches of such parties.

That cross-party support exists for remembering terrorism between centrist parties is possible because, unlike with other memory issues, the center-right wants to participate in conversations surrounding these memories. Since no reasonable party is going to argue against remembering terrorism or in favor of terrorism itself, the result is discourse on the subject that is flat and apolitical. Several factors may explain why the Spanish right is so willing to confront victims of terrorism while ignoring the victims of Franco and the dictatorship. Recency may play a role, the fact that terrorism continues to be present in contemporary Spain while the dictatorship and war remain past events, may give it some pertinence. Some argue, such as Heath-Kelly and de Mosteyrín, that right-wing interest in terrorism is instead deeply political. In remembering non-state terrorism such as ETA, parties may find convenient antidotes to

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<sup>132</sup> Partido Popular (2011). *Programa Electoral Partido Popular 2008*. Partido Popular, Madrid.

<sup>133</sup> Partido Socialista Obrero Español, *Programa Electoral, Elecciones Generales 2011*.

remembering the vast state-sponsored terrorism of Franco and the transition. Doing so may also help support right-wing policies, as seen with the Aznar administration, while enforcing ideas of shared guilt and responsibility.

Not all parties present terrorism with the apolitical nature of their centrist peers. In particular, Vox has utilized the memory of terrorism to attack political opponents. In its two manifestos thus far, the party has stated it is committed to “honoring the memory of all victims of separatist and Islamist terrorism, from schools to the last official body.”<sup>134</sup> This distinction of forms of terrorism is unique, because while most parties tend to speak about terrorism in general, Vox is specific. Though these kinds of terrorism are the most prominent in modern Spain, the nation also has an extensive history of state-sponsored, right-wing, and anti-regionalist terror. Not coincidentally, Vox has long preached against two twin evils, one internal and one (supposedly) external, undermining Spain: regionalism and Islam.<sup>135</sup>

Vox endorses a liberal take on what can reasonably be labeled terrorism, claiming that pro-independence regionalist parties are a form of terrorist group, and their existence should be made illegal.<sup>136</sup> This includes their archenemy EH Bildu, a Basque separatist party whose understanding of terrorism is also controversial. The party and its leadership have close connections to the former political wing of ETA, so much so that it was briefly banned, something Vox would like to see revived.<sup>137</sup> For its part, Bildu says it condemns terrorism in all forms, but opponents point to an alleged reluctance to officially condemn ETA and its actions.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Vox (2019). *Programa Electoral 10N 2019*. Vox, Madrid.

<sup>135</sup> Forti, S. (2021). *Extrema derecha 2.0: Qué es y cómo combatirla*. Siglo XXI de España Editores.

<sup>136</sup> Pérez, F. J. (2019, November 8). *¿Por qué no se pueden ilegalizar los partidos independentistas como quiere Vox?* El País.

<sup>137</sup> El País. (2014, April 10). *Vox pide en San Sebastián que se abra la ilegalización de “Bildu-Sortu-ETA.”* El País.

<sup>138</sup> Saiz, R. (2022, March 22). *La condena expresa del terrorismo de ETA lleva a EH Bildu a rechazar el Plan de Convivencia de Navarra*. El Diario.



Both Bildu and Vox have a storied history of exchanging insults over the matter on the parliament floor and using each other's accusations to appeal to their own bases, a strange talking point unique to the political fringe.<sup>139</sup>

The fact that Spain's history of terrorism is a component of national memory that virtually all parties are willing to address makes it both a unique theme and one unlikely to fade from public discourse in the foreseeable future. For centrist parties, this comes in the form of apolitical and simplistic condemnations of terrorism which do little to further understanding of why and how terroristic acts occur.<sup>140</sup> However, the fact the center-right is willing to engage with this line of memory is notable, raising questions about party motivations in invoking such memories. For parties at political extremes, the memory of terrorism has been hijacked to make partisan points. With Vox, this presents itself as labeling ideological opponents as terrorists and portraying terrorism as a leftist tendency. The extensive and disunified nature of terrorism in Spain, spanning more than half a century, allows for these differing forms of addressal and leaves significant room for parties to interpret these memories as they see fit.

## CONCLUSIONS

The historical memory of Spain surrounding experiences of civil war, dictatorship, and the transition to democracy shows that different partisan cleavages within society have found dramatically different ways to remember the same histories. Political parties exemplify these differences, choosing to address a shared past in varying ways, while also choosing contrasting memories to remember. In doing so, they represent separate societal understandings of complex

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<sup>139</sup> El País. (2022, July 13). *Bildu, a las víctimas de ETA: "Queremos decirles de corazón que sentimos enormemente el sufrimiento causado."* El País.

<sup>140</sup> Heath-Kelly, C., & Fernández de Mosteyrín, L, The political use of victimhood.

and controversial history. Electoral manifestos and official party discourse offer a view into these differing memories, showcasing agreed perspectives to voters and the rank and file alike, highlighting partisan perceptions on historical memory.

Manifestos issued between 2000 and the present display clear ideological splits in how parties approach memory. For national parties, with few exceptions, the amount of space dedicated to the subject has greatly increased within the period surveyed, regardless of partisanship. Before the mid-2000s, few manifestos mentioned memory issues, the “Pack of Silence” uninterrupted. Few parties continue this silence today, with most bringing up the issue in their writing. One notable exception has been the PP, the nation’s mainstream conservative party, which has steadfastly protested what they view as a deliberate politicization of memory. To them, invoking painful histories can only serve to hurt contemporary Spain, fueling harmful polarization and undermining the democracy born in the transition.

PP’s rival, the center-left PSOE, has taken the opposite approach, aggressively confronting memory in and outside of their manifestos. More than any other party, they have brought the issue into public discourse and government chambers. In this, they have received the support of all other major national left-wing parties, including UP and IU. To these parties, tackling historical memory is a matter of historical justice and non-repetition, an overdue addressal of wrongdoings the state cannot be silent about. Where PP sees party interest in memory as political shenanigans, PSOE and its allies see a moral must. This stark division between left and right, with one side wholly rejecting most discourse concerning memory, represents just how divergent prominent and long-standing parties are on the issue.

On the right, the rise of the far-right Vox has challenged this status quo. For the first time since the transition, a party with politics that unabashedly resemble, and echo Francoism has

achieved elected office. Vox has been less than quiet in its opposition to left-wing positions on memory, displaying a level of resistance not seen with other right-wing parties. The party is no stranger to memory politics, its nationalist politics are heavily informed by history, expertly utilizing national legend and identity. Their opposition comes, instead, from the fact that the memories of others (predominantly the left) contradict their fanatical vision of what Spain was, is and should be. Future elections will test just how potent this position is, and whether zealous far-right agitating on memory actually attracts voters.

The clear positions of national parties do not always translate to regional parties. Unlike their national counterparts, regional parties do not consistently use manifestos to address memory issues. Rather, they tend to focus on local and economic issues. This does not mean that these parties lack perspective, many are involved in drafting legislation and have made their opinions clear, but this does not reflect in their manifestos. Parties from the autonomous region of Catalonia are interesting caveats, using national historical memory to argue for secession from the rest of the nation. By tying the modern Spanish state to the memory of its dictatorial predecessor, and by pointing to national failings to address this past, these parties have made rhetorically powerful arguments for independence.

Four specific themes were prominent in party manifestos: memory laws, the victims of war and dictatorship, Francoist symbology, and the memory of terrorism. Together, the discussion of these subjects made up the vast majority of content. Rhetoric and action regarding all topics, except for terrorism, originated with left-wing parties. To them, memory legislation is a needed step in addressing the nation's past, victims must be acknowledged, and the symbolic places and propaganda of the dictatorship must be removed. The center-right has opposed all these actions, but offered little alternative. To them, memory laws are partisan government

overreach, victimhood is a past ordeal, and removing controversial symbology is historical erasure. While right-wing parties have tried to maintain the “Pact of Silence”, Vox has gone further, painting itself as a defender of the legacies of the dictatorship whose actions underlie the contention around memory.

The sole issue that virtually all parties are comfortable addressing is the memory of terrorism. Contemporary attacks and a lack of controversy makes this an uncomplicated theme to speak on, with most manifestos doing so. Centrist parties tend to make apolitical condemnations and promise government support for memorializing victims, while some parties on the political fringe depart from this to weaponize terrorism against political enemies. Vox has spun questionable connections between its ideological rivals and terrorism, while EH Bildu’s links to ETA undermine the validity of its rhetoric on the topic. The fact the Spanish right is willing to engage with the memory and victims of terrorism while shunning those of Francoism has led to questions of intent, namely whether they have adopted the topic as an alternative to remembering other past abuses.

Manifestos showcase just how distinct partisan approaches to historical memory have been between Spanish political parties and ideologies. For the left, memory has become a key electoral issue, with memory as a moral obligation of governing a country with a difficult past. To the right, this interest is damaging, and its manifestations should be stopped. In this conflict over memory, party and ideological histories left over from the civil war are rehashed. PSOE, IU, and other left-leaning or regional parties were themselves victims of Franco and the war. Their pushes for justice and belief that their work is fundamental to Spanish democracy is rooted in this heritage. Simultaneously, right-wing parties like PP evolved from vestiges of the

dictatorship, while parties like Vox serve as ideological successors. Confronting memories that primarily describe the horrors of the regime is thus difficult for these parties.

For the period beginning with the civil war to the present, Spain's historical memory is still being pieced together. Individual memory is still concentrated into collective memory, and historical narratives remain unsolidified. At this juncture, for the foreseeable future, historical memory will continue to be an inescapable issue in the political sphere. So long as this remains true, parties will continue to use manifestos and other discourse will have to address the subject, because despite partisan division, remembering is inescapable, histories cannot write themselves, graves cannot unbury themselves, and the past cannot go answered.

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