

Structure, Politics, and Ethnonationalist Contention in Post-Franco Spain: An Integrated Model*

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Previous models of nationalism have been unable to adequately account for variation in forms or levels of contentious nationalist activity. Building on the most important theoretical tools from the literatures on social movements and nationalism, an alternative model is proposed in which structure, politics, and action assume equal roles in an interdependent causal system. It is further proposed that violent and nonviolent contention, though conceptually distinct phenomena, are the products of a fundamentally similar set of factors. The model posits that sociostructural 'root causes' are vital to the development of ethnonationalist contentious politics, but indirectly via mobilization. The direct determinants of protest and rebellion are a conjunction of organizational mobilization and political opportunity structures. In particular, a shared identity gives groups of people the *basis* for organizational mobilization; mobilizational resources provide the *means* for such mobilization; grievances lend the *reason*, and a series of political factors structure the *opportunities* of mobilized groups to contend in a conventional, violent or nonviolent manner. The opportunity structures are then themselves transformed by the nature of the contention that takes place. Using a 3SLS structural equation model and original data from the 17 autonomous communities of Spain between 1977 and 1996, the results show that structure, politics, and action are, as predicted, three fundamental components of an interdependent causal system. The vital, yet indirect role of grievances and group identity in the generation of ethnonationalist conflict is confirmed, and a number of powerful relationships obtain with the individual elements of the political opportunity structure. Higher levels of democracy are related to increased protest, more intense repression is associated with lower levels of contentious activity, and the level of regional autonomy has no apparent impact on conflict. In the short term, moreover, Spain's major democratic transition is shown to exacerbate existing conflict propensities.

Introduction

Ernest Gellner (1983: 45) once argued that 'for every effective nationalism, there are *n*

potential ones . . . which do not bother to struggle, which fail to activate their potential nationalism, which do not even try'. In fact, there are vastly more linguistic, ethnic, and cultural communities than there are nationalist movements or states. While most ethnonational communities fail to mobilize and take action, those that do can have a dramatic impact on a country's political, economic, and social fabric. This is readily apparent in Spain, which experienced thousands of nationalist contentious events throughout its 17 autonomous regions

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