

# NATION-BUILDING AND LINGUISTIC UNIFICATION IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRAGMENTED SPAIN AND FRANCE

Andreas Bonnet

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*Whilst French elites successfully managed to unify their country around a common culture and language in the nineteenth century, Spain has remained a culturally and linguistically fragmented country throughout its history as a nation, despite elites' desire to achieve a similar linguistic unification in both countries. Following essential elements of Wright, Gellner, and Anderson's theories, this essay will consider the central role that state elites have played throughout these top-down nation-building processes and try to identify and detail the elements that can explain how these different outcomes came about, despite the two countries having rather similar situations in 1800. Three means are the central foci of this comparative study: territorial integration, industrialization and economic integration, and education. This comparative paper shows that none of these three means can be designated as the central factor behind the different linguistic and national situations of the two countries in the late nineteenth century, but rather that nation-building and linguistic unification were holistic processes which required a strong implication of the state in the development of each of these three means in order to be successful.*

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The 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona exhibited Catalonia's unique regional identity. A band played the region's official anthem, "Els Segadors," dancers performed the traditional Catalanian sardana, and the Spanish king delivered a speech in Catalan.<sup>1</sup> In Spain's neighboring country, France, such regional rather than national celebrations are hardly imaginable. This ceremony highlights a fundamental difference between France and Spain: France has managed relative success in unification of the country around French culture and language, while Spain has remained a culturally and linguistically fragmented country throughout its history as a nation. However, the two countries once had very similar linguistic situations. France was once a territory with various linguistic forms of Germanic dialects, Flemish, Artesien, Picard, Catalan, Basque, Breton, or various forms of *langue d'oc* and Spain has long contained linguistic minorities of Catalan, Basque, or Galician.<sup>2</sup> Although many debates remain concerning the origin of nations, scholars have identified the nineteenth century as a crucial moment in nation-building: according to Kedourie, nationalism was invented in Europe at the beginning of the century, and, for Humlebaek, the nineteenth century "saw a process of nation-building ... by which

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Janofsky, "Games Begin with a Shot of Catalanian Spirit," *The Times*, July 26, 1992, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Clare Mar-Molinero, *The Politics of Language in the Spanish-speaking World* (London: Routledge, 2000), 39; Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: the modernisation of rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), 69-70.

is meant nationalizing the pre-existing political community.”<sup>3</sup> In Spain and France, this century was crucial in terms of nation-building and elites in each country hoped to build a culturally and linguistically unified nation.<sup>4</sup> To an extent, both countries pursued Rousseau’s ideal of a political nation, and for Barnard, this meant that “to become patriots and citizens ... people had first to become members: instead of being independent entities they had to become interdependent parts within a larger whole.”<sup>5</sup> Crucially, this process implied linguistic unification both in France and in Spain. However, despite a similar objective, this process resulted in contrasting outcomes for the two countries. By the twentieth century, France had a largely unified language across its territory and gradually became the “one and indivisible” nation that its 1791 Constitution had called for.<sup>6</sup> In Spain, strong “non-Castilian speaking linguistic communities” remained, and “the creation of a confident unchallenged Spanish national identity had not been achieved.”<sup>7</sup> This essay attempts to identify and detail elements to explain how these different outcomes occurred, despite similar situations in the two countries in 1800. Following essential elements of Wright, Gellner, and Anderson’s theories, it will mostly consider the central role that state elites have played throughout these top-down nation-building processes, and will focus on how the two countries’ central states have pursued their nation-building and linguistic unification objectives. Three means seem to have been of major importance in attempting to reach these objectives: territorial integration, industrialization and economic integration, and education—these elements will be central to this comparative analysis.<sup>8</sup> This essay will argue that none of these can be designated as the central factor behind the different linguistic and national situations of the two countries in the late nineteenth century, but rather that nation-building and linguistic unification were holistic processes which required a strong implication of the state in the development of each of these three means in order to be successful. This paper will thus begin by a thorough assessment of the situation of the countries at the beginning of the nineteenth century and of the objectives that their respective nation-builders wanted to achieve throughout that century. It will then compare nineteenth-century Spain and France’s territorial integration, their industrialization and economic integration processes, and their national education efforts in order to determine how these elements can explain the differences in outcomes that have been identified. Finally, it will discuss the implications of the findings resulting from this comparison and will, more specifically, analyze the crucial role of the state and public investments in top-down nation-building processes.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Spain and France were in similar situations. In Spain, state elites sought to create a Spanish nation around the Castilian

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<sup>3</sup> Carsten Humlebaek, *Spain: Inventing the Nation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 1; Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 60.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Baycroft, “France: Ethnicity and the Revolutionary Tradition,” in *What is a Nation? Europe 1789-1914*, eds. Timothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 35; Justo G. Beramendi, “Identity, Ethnicity, and State in Spain: 19th and 20th Centuries,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 5 (1999): 80.

<sup>5</sup> F. M. Barnard, “National Culture and Political Legitimacy: Herder and Rousseau,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 44 (1983): 236.

<sup>6</sup> *La constitution française; présentée au Roi par L’Assemblée Nationale, le 3 septembre 1791* (Paris, 1791), 8.

<sup>7</sup> Mar-Molinero, *The Politics of Language*, 50-51.

<sup>8</sup> Sue Wright, *Language Policy and Language Planning: From Nationalism to Globalisation* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 41; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 113-114; Ernst Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 34.

identity. For instance, in 1841, Maria Cristina de Borbón started with the explicit phrase of “to the nation” as she addressed her fellow Spaniards.”<sup>9</sup> The early nineteenth century coincided with the period during which the plural “las Españas” was no longer used to describe the country and was progressively replaced with the singular “España.”<sup>10</sup> For hundreds of years, the Iberian peninsula was known to host various proto-national groups, such as the Basques, the Catalans, the Castilians, the Valencians, and the Muslim people of Granada.<sup>11</sup> According to Beramendi, Spanish state elites who were heavily influenced by notions of nationalism stemming from the American and French revolutions were determined to build a unified and homogeneous nation.<sup>12</sup> In fact, this move towards a unified culture had already started in the late eighteenth century with the “Castilianisation” process marked by royal ordinances such as Charles III’s 1768 decree stating that “throughout the kingdom the Castilian language [should] be used in the administration and education.”<sup>13</sup> For Mar-Molinero, this will was taken from theory to practice as soon as the early eighteenth century with the creation of the *Real Academia de la Lengua Española* in 1713 which first created norms of language in Spain, an “essential part of the process of linguistic nationalism.”<sup>14</sup> In order to complete the unification process, remaining regional identities and languages which represented threats to the process had to be suppressed, or at least weakened.<sup>15</sup> Among the regions with a strong non-Castilian identity at the time, Catalonia and the Basque Country were the only two which contained a sizeable share of the country’s population and had distinct and widespread languages, although strong movements for self-government only appeared there in the last years of the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> For Beramendi, Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia “had a specific ethnicity, and the first two also had their own institutions of corporate self-government.”<sup>17</sup> As early as 1710, Spain appeared to be a nationally fragmented territorial unit, and elites began to consider linguistic unification as a means for nation-building.

As mentioned earlier, France’s situation was very similar to that of Spain in the early nineteenth century. The 1789 French Revolution led to an “upsurge in French nationalism,” and was exemplified by the 1791 Constitution’s civic oath which began: “I swear to be loyal to the Nation, the Law, and the King.”<sup>18</sup> According to Seton-Watson, in France, “the main instrument of centralization and of national greatness was the French language.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, as in Spain, the necessity to linguistically unify the country quickly became one of the French elites’ main objectives, independent

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<sup>9</sup> Marie Christine de Bourbon, *A la nation: moi la reine Marie Christine de Bourbon* (Paris, 1841), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the politics of Nationalism* (London: Westview Press, 1977), 53.

<sup>11</sup> Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, 53.

<sup>12</sup> Beramendi, “Identity, Ethnicity and State in Spain,” 80.

<sup>13</sup> Mar-Molinero, *The Politics of Language*, 22.

<sup>14</sup> Mar-Molinero, *The Politics of Language*, 22.

<sup>15</sup> Angel Smith, *The Origins of Catalan Nationalism, 1770-1898* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Mar-Molinero, *The Politics of Language*, 23-24; Stephen Jacobson, “Spain: The Iberian Mosaic,” in *What is a Nation? Europe 1789-1914*, eds. Timothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 210.

<sup>17</sup> Beramendi, “Identity, Ethnicity and State in Spain,” 82.

<sup>18</sup> Brian Vick, “Language and Nation: National Identity and Civic-Ethnic Typology,” in *What is a Nation? Europe 1789-1914*, eds. Timothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 157; *La constitution française*, 10.

<sup>19</sup> Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, 48.

from the nature of the regime under whom they served. For instance, Talleyrand—an influential civil servant who served under the Republic, the Empire, and the Monarchy published a Report on Public Education in 1791 in which he asserted that French language should be taught to every single French citizen and that local “corrupted dialects” should be “forced to disappear.”<sup>20</sup> However, linguistic unification around French was far from being achieved in the early years of the nineteenth century. Hobsbawm estimates that only 12 to 13 percent of the country’s population spoke French at the time of the Revolution, and even later in 1863, 8,381 of France’s 37,510 communes spoke no French according to official figures.<sup>21</sup> Non-French-speaking communes spoke numerous languages or *patois*, among which Provençal in the South, Breton in Brittany, and Flemish in the North-East were the most widely spoken.<sup>22</sup> Even though the revolutionaries failed to linguistically unify the country immediately, according to Eugen Weber, “what survived from the shipwreck was the principle.”<sup>23</sup> Linguistic unification as a prerequisite for successful nation-building became a constant state objective throughout the century, especially after the establishment of the Third Republic in 1870.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, Spain and France shared two main characteristics in the nineteenth century: a linguistically fragmented population, but, more importantly, a drive to fight this fragmentation and unify the country under the same language and culture in order to finally build a strong and homogeneous nation.

The construction of new transportation infrastructure appears to have been a crucial means of linguistic unification in nineteenth-century Western Europe. Indeed, the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century led to the advent of new technologies such as the steam machine and railroads which considerably reduced the amount of time needed for long-distance travels.<sup>25</sup> As highlighted by Beck with the example of France, the connection of numerous villages due to these technologies led to a greater opening of previously autarkic villages to the rest of the country.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, for Weber, roads also broke French villages’ autarky as illustrated by the break of Finistère’s isolation after the construction of a wide-reaching vicinal road system in the last third of the nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, “there could be no national unity before there was national circulation.”<sup>28</sup> In France, national circulation was permitted by a consequent and high-quality road system, and France had around 45,000 kilometers of paved roads by 1855.<sup>29</sup> This was bolstered by very high levels of public investments in the development of roads and railroads, especially in the latter part of the nineteenth century: the 1879 Freycinet Plan consisted of nine billion francs of investment which permitted the creation of over

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<sup>20</sup> Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, *Rapport sur L’Instruction Publique, fait au nom du comité de constitution, à l’Assemblée Nationale, les 10, 11 et 19 Septembre 1791* (Paris, 1791), 94-95.

<sup>21</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 60; Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 67.

<sup>22</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 80-84.

<sup>23</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 71.

<sup>24</sup> Vick, “Language and Nation,” 158.

<sup>25</sup> Charles More, *Understanding the Industrial Revolution* (London: Routledge, 2000), 123.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Beck, “Les effets d’une ligne du plan Freycinet sur une société rurale,” *Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte*, 5 (1987), 570-571.

<sup>27</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 204.

<sup>28</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 218.

<sup>29</sup> Miquel-Angel Garcia-Lopez, Alfonso Herranz-Loncan, Filippo Tassinari, and Elisabet Viladecans-Marsal, “Paving the Way to Modern Growth. Evidence from Bourbon Roads in Spain,” *EHES Working Paper*, 209 (2021), 7.

16,000 kilometers of railroads.<sup>30</sup> In Spain, transportation infrastructures were also built “for the purposes of nation-building.”<sup>31</sup> However, it took place on a magnitude nowhere comparable with that of France’s efforts, as illustrated by the accounts offered by Sarrasi, a French traveler in Spain in 1904:

So, I said to myself, it takes thirty-one animals and one man to bring thirty hectolitres of wheat to the city. In France, two chariots and two pairs of oxen would have been enough; but in our country, we have excellent roads both in the plain and in the mountains, and in Spain, they have only paths that are accessible only to mules and donkeys.<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, the Spanish state lacked the economic resources to make large investment plans and build roads and railroads that would unify the entire country into a single unit: according to a report written by the Spanish General Directorate of Public Works in 1856, road-building in the country was hindered by “insufficient funds” and “the lack of qualified personnel.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the country’s operating railway network consisted of only 11,040 kilometers by 1900, whereas France’s network was approximately 46,000 kilometers long as early as 1882 according to Lesguillier, a French Member of Parliament in the late nineteenth-century.<sup>34</sup> Unlike France where regions were progressively unified over the course of the century thanks to roads and railways, Spain remained a territorially fragmented country. The already-peripheral regions of Catalonia and the Basque Country remained geographically isolated from the rest of the Peninsula throughout the century.<sup>35</sup> As a result, Spanish citizens who only spoke their region’s language hardly ever met Castilian speakers and had little incentive to learn Castilian. On the contrary, the progressive opening of France’s most isolated regions, Pyrenees, Brittany, and Flanders, to the rest of the country through roads and railways blended speakers of various languages together and pushed non-French speakers to learn French in order to remain involved in social and economic activities.<sup>36</sup> As such, elites’ nation-building and linguistic unification efforts seem to have an important explanatory power to understand the success or failure of territorial integration in previously isolated regions.

Alongside territorial integration, economic integration and industrialization also were crucial state levers for nation-building and language unification. Gellner has highlighted the central role that nineteenth-century industrialization and economic integration played in the unification of a nation and its language.<sup>37</sup> In practice, as demonstrated by Weber, the expansion of industry makes the use of a common language necessary among workers, and fosters economic migration, another factor

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<sup>30</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 209-210.

<sup>31</sup> Germa Bel, “Infrastructure and Nation-Building: the Regulation and Financing of Network Transportation Infrastructures in Spain (1720-2010),” *Business History*, 53 (2011), 702.

<sup>32</sup> Sarrasi, *L’Espagne d’Aujourd’hui*, (Paris, 1904), 271.

<sup>33</sup> Dirección General de las Obras Publicas, *Memoria sobre el estado de las obras publicas en España en 1856*, (Madrid, 1856), 28; Gabriel Tortella, “Patterns of Economic Retardation and Recovery in South-Western Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” *The Economic History Review*, 47 (1994), 10.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel A. Tirado, Elisenda Paluzie, and Jordi Pons, “Economic Integration and Industrial Location: The Case of Spain before World War 1,” *Journal of Economic Geography*, 2 (2002), 346; Désiré-Jules Lesguillier, *La question des travaux publics. Extraits de discours prononcés dans diverses réunions publiques par M. Lesguillier, député de l’Aisne, ancien Sous-secrétaire d’Etat des travaux publics*, (Château-Thierry, 1882), 1.

<sup>35</sup> Angel Smith, *The Origins of Catalan Nationalism*, 23; Mar-Molinero, *The Politics of Language*, 46.

<sup>36</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 206.

<sup>37</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 27-31.

of linguistic unification.<sup>38</sup> In the nineteenth century, France was an epitome of the success of these factors in practice. As industry developed in France, economic migration became increasingly widespread. According to Weber, “in France as a whole, the percentage of the population born in one department and living in another, 11.3 in 1861 and 15 in 1881, climbed to 19.6 in 1901”—a phenomenon favored by the development of a wide-reaching transportation network.<sup>39</sup> As a result, in workshops and factories, immigrants from other French provinces had to use French as a *lingua franca*. For instance, in Vosges, where German dialects were spoken by the local population, the development of the cotton industry in the 1870s “all but wiped out the local dialect” as the “mixture of *patois*” favored a common language of French.<sup>40</sup> On the other side of the Pyrenees, this phenomenon was hindered by Spain’s economic “backwardness”: industrialization was lagging in the Iberian country.<sup>41</sup> Despite the rapid development of the industrial sector in Western Europe, the percentage of Spaniards working in the agricultural sector among the total labor force rose from 69.9 percent to 72.2 percent between 1860 and 1900.<sup>42</sup> According to de Guérin du Cayla, a French traveler in Spain, Spain’s economy was “impoverished, annihilated, [and] no longer resembled the glorious Castile of the old days” in 1866.<sup>43</sup> As a result of this lagging industrial sector, Castilian was not spread as a *lingua franca* like the French idiom had been. However, the economic factor that truly hindered linguistic unification in the Iberian country was the fact that Catalonia and the Basque Country, regions with a strong national identity and a distinct language, were “the two most industrialized regions of the Peninsula.”<sup>44</sup> Catalonia, for instance, produced nearly 40 percent of the industrial value added to the country in the late nineteenth century with only 10 percent of its population.<sup>45</sup> Thus, instead of pushing Basques and Catalans to move from their home regions and learn the state’s official language like the Bretons or the Alsatians, these regions’ strong economic development reinforced their isolation and their internal interconnection.<sup>46</sup> Thus, different industrialization patterns and economic integration in the nineteenth century can also explain the two countries’ different levels of success building a nation and unifying its language.

Education is another area in which the state’s top-down nation-building and linguistic unification processes were especially significant in nineteenth-century Western Europe.<sup>47</sup> In order to build the unified political nation theorized by Rousseau, states needed more than laws: education was also essential as a means to unify the nation culturally as well as linguistically.<sup>48</sup> In France, the central role of schooling as a nation-building tool was already recognized by the revolutionaries in the late eighteenth century: between 1791 and 1799, twenty-five projects on public schooling—projects which systematically advocated for the diffusion of French in lieu

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<sup>38</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 27-31; Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 86.

<sup>39</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 280.

<sup>40</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 78.

<sup>41</sup> Jacobson, “Spain: The Iberian Mosaic,” 210.

<sup>42</sup> Tortella, “Patterns of Economic Retardation,” 6.

<sup>43</sup> A. de Guérin du Cayla, *A L’Espagne: Un Conseil Amical* (Bordeaux, 1866), 4.

<sup>44</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Catalan Nationalism*, 23; Humleback, *Spain: Inventing the Nation*, 24; David D. Laitin, “Linguistic Revival: Politics and Culture in Catalonia,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31 (1989), 300.

<sup>45</sup> Tirado, Paluzie, Pons, “Economic Integration and Industrial Location,” 343.

<sup>46</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Catalan Nationalism*, 23.

<sup>47</sup> Anthony D. Smith, “State-Making and Nation-Building,” in *States in History*, ed. John A. Hall (Oxford, 1986), 231.

<sup>48</sup> Barnard, “National Culture and Political Legitimacy,” 240.

of local languages—were presented to the legislative assemblies.<sup>49</sup> In France, the various regimes of the nineteenth century all shared this objective to unify the language through schooling, but true unification through education was only made possible by the Third Republic’s reforms of primary education.<sup>50</sup> Influenced by French thinkers such as Talleyrand, Spanish elites pursued similar objectives as illustrated by the *Informe Quintana* of 1813, which for the first time asserted that only Spanish should be used in primary and secondary schools.<sup>51</sup> In fact, free and compulsory schooling was introduced earlier in Spain than in France: whereas France introduced it with the 1880-1881 Lois Ferry, Spain passed its own piece of legislation on the matter, the Ley Moyano, as early as 1857.<sup>52</sup> However, *de facto*, France managed to effectively fight linguistic fragmentation through the education system much earlier and more effectively than Spain. Spain was hindered by several factors when it came to establishing an effective national schooling system. First, the state was heavily in debt after a series of unsuccessful wars abroad, devastated by civil wars, and because of its own elites’ greed, was financially “unable to provide the country with a public educational system, ... a crucial tool for the nationalizing effort.”<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the state’s efforts were also hindered by its own political and social structure. On one side, the Church—which largely dominated the educational system before the intervention of the state—was reluctant to abandon its religious priorities for the secular elites’ nationalizing agenda.<sup>54</sup> According to Sarrasi who visited Catalonia in 1904, the clergy was more interested in maintaining the use of Catalan among peasants rather than teaching them Spanish.<sup>55</sup> On the other side, the caciques, influential dignitaries who were mostly driven by their personal interests, were widely opposed to widespread schooling as the illiteracy of peasants reinforced their social and economic roles at the local level.<sup>56</sup> As described in 1887 by Manuel Panero, an inspector of primary education, “the caciques sought to extinguish the light of education.”<sup>57</sup> In France, even though there were oppositions to national education, the state’s efforts received sufficient funding to be effective and did not face the same hindrances as Spain. The French state built an impressive number of schools all over the country in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1833, France had 31,420 schools and 1.2 million children attended school daily; by 1847 the number of schools had doubled and the number of schooled children had tripled.<sup>58</sup> Alongside that, growing anti-clericalism—which culminated under Gambetta and in the latter part of the century—strongly diminished the power of the Church in France, and Charles Péguy’s black-frocked hussards of the Republic progressively replaced clergymen in France’s

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<sup>49</sup> Renée Balibar, Dominique Laporte, *Le Français National: Politique et pratiques de la langue française sous la Révolution française* (Paris, 1974), 129-130.

<sup>50</sup> Vick, “Language and Nation,” 158.

<sup>51</sup> Natividad Araque Hontangas, *Manuel José Quintana y la Instrucción Pública* (Madrid, 2013), 55.

<sup>52</sup> Antonio Montero Alcaide, “Una ley centenaria: la ley de instrucción pública (Ley Moyano, 1857),” *Cabás*, 1 (2009), 4-5; Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 309.

<sup>53</sup> José Álvarez Junco, “Spanish National Identity in the Age of Nationalism,” in *State and Nation-Making in Latin America and Spain: Republics of the Possible*, eds. Miguel A. Centeno and Agustín E. Ferraro (Cambridge, 2013), 311.

<sup>54</sup> Humlebaek, *Spain: Inventing the Nation*, 14.

<sup>55</sup> Sarrasi, *L’Espagne d’Aujourd’hui*, 83.

<sup>56</sup> Narciso de Gabriel, “Caciques, Schools, and Schoolteachers in Spain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the 1920s,” *Paedagogia Historica*, 54 (2018), 550-551.

<sup>57</sup> Narciso de Gabriel, “Caciques, Schools, and Schoolteachers in Spain,” 550-551.

<sup>58</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 307.

villages.<sup>59</sup> As a result of these sharp disparities between the two countries, their respective literacy rates in French and Spanish were incomparable at the end of the nineteenth century: whereas France's literacy rate reached 83 percent in 1900, Spain's was only at 44 percent.<sup>60</sup> Thus, the development of schooling systems also seems to have played a role in the patterns of nation-building and linguistic unification in France and Spain.

So far, this discussion of the two case studies has only highlighted differences between the two countries. Two elements can explain this fact. First, the three means treated are interdependent: the presence of one increases the necessity for and the probability of the presence of another, which in turn favors linguistic unification and nation-building. For instance, as highlighted by Weber, "it needed personal experience to persuade people of the usefulness of education": industrialization alongside economic and territorial integration alone cannot linguistically unify a country, however they create incentives for people to learn the new national language and therefore blend themselves into the nation's culture.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, building schools and recruiting school teachers remained pointless as long as the rural inhabitants were unable to reach them, and roads not only created an incentive to go to school, but also a means without which large-scale schooling in previously autarkic villages would have been impossible.<sup>62</sup> Thus, the state's three means of nation-building and linguistic unification mentioned reinforced each other while poor investments and lack of commitment in one of these three elements hindered the development of the two others. Therefore, it seems difficult to highlight one of the three means mentioned as the central factor behind the different linguistic situations of the two countries at the turn of the twentieth century. In fact, nation-building and linguistic unification appear to be holistic processes within which each component is essential and reinforces the impact of the others. The other element which can explain the major differences between Spain and France is the level of public investment and, more generally, the state's dedication to the achievement of its nation-building objectives. There exists a huge gap between the desire to unify a nation and effective nation-building as made evident in the case of Spain. As highlighted by many nineteenth-century writers, the Spanish state lacked the discipline and the funds to effectively pursue nation-building policies.<sup>63</sup> Pierre-Léonce Imbert, a French traveler in late nineteenth-century Spain, described the Spanish state as being dependent on lotteries to avoid bankruptcy, and compared the state's finances to the Danaids' sieve as he stated, "no sooner are they a quarter full that they are emptied ... into the ministers' pockets" (see Appendix C for the original text).<sup>64</sup> Despite an undeniable ambition to unify the nation around Castilian language and culture, Spanish statesmen lacked the funds to pursue their policies—a want of funds which can, in part, be explained by their own greed. Even though no specific difference alone regarding the three means mentioned can explain the different outcomes in the two countries' linguistic situation at the end of the nineteenth century, it seems clear that an effective and economically powerful state is

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<sup>59</sup> Charles Péguy, "L'argent, suite," in *Cahiers de la Quinzaine: Neuvième cahier de la quatorzième série*, ed. Charles Péguy (Paris, 1913), 230; Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 359-360.

<sup>60</sup> Tortella, "Patterns of Economic Retardation," 11.

<sup>61</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 328.

<sup>62</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 320.

<sup>63</sup> Alvarez Junco, "Spanish National Identity," 311.

<sup>64</sup> Pierre-Léonce Imbert, *L'Espagne, splendeurs et misères: voyage artistique et pittoresque* (Paris, 1875), 310.



a necessary condition in order to pursue efficacious nation-building and linguistic unification policies.

At first glance, this essay seems to raise more questions than it brings answers. All three of the state's means analyzed seem to have been of central importance for nation-building and linguistic unification, and none of them can be discarded as irrelevant. In France, successful territorial integration broke the autarky of rural villages where French was not yet in use, whereas the State's failure to connect the various regions of Spain hindered the diffusion of Spanish in the Iberian country. The rise of industrialization and the subsequent economic integration of the country created strong incentives for non-French speakers to learn the central state's language, whereas economic isolation of non-Spanish-speaking provinces in Spain reinforced their linguistic isolation. Finally, consequent investments in schooling enabled the French state to spread its language everywhere on its territory, whereas in Spain, numerous political and institutional hindrances slowed down the diffusion of Spanish through schooling. As a result of this unequal development between the two countries, France was progressively becoming a more unified country in the early twentieth century, whereas the Spanish state had to face the revival of regional-nationalist claims such as the *Renaixença* movement in Catalonia or the movement led by Sabino Arana in the Basque Country.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that all three of the means analyzed appeared to have been essential to linguistic unification and nation-building in France highlights a crucial element about these processes: they are holistic processes which require strong public investments in the various fields of economy, education, and transportation infrastructures in order to be successful. These three fields appear to have been interdependent throughout the French nation-building process and the central state successfully understood that none of them was to be neglected. In Spain, the state's lack of investments and dedication seem to have deeply hindered nation-building, despite the strong will of many elites to unify the country's culture and language around Castilian identity. Thus, this essay has shown that, in the context of top-down nineteenth-century western European nation-building and language uniformization, the elites' will is sometimes insufficient to achieve tangible objectives: the multifariousness and the artificial nature of the process called for consequent state investments in various interrelated domains which were possible in France, but structurally impossible in Spain.

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<sup>65</sup> Mar-Molinero, *The Politics of Language*, 40- 47.

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**Appendix A: Talleyrand on French and regional languages**

“Une singularité frappante de l'état dont nous nous sommes affranchis, est sans doute que la langue nationale, qui chaque jour étendoit ses conquêtes au-delà des limites de la France, soit restée au milieu de nous comme inaccessible à un si grand nombre de ses habitans, et que le premier lien de communication ait pu paroître pour plusieurs de nos contrées une barrière insurmontable. [...] Les Écoles primaires vont mettre fin à cette étrange inégalité: la langue de la Constitution et des lois y sera enseignée à tous; et cette foule de dialectes corrompus, derniers restes de la féodalité sera contrainte de disparaître: la force des choses le commande. Pour parvenir à ce but, à peine est-il besoin d'indiquer des méthodes: la meilleure de toutes pour enseigner une langue dans le premier âge de la raison [...].”<sup>66</sup>

**Appendix B: Sarrasi on roads in Spain**

“Il faut donc, me suis-je dit, trente et un animaux et un homme pour amener en ville trente hectolitres de blé. En France, il eût suffi de deux chars et de deux paires de bœufs ; mais dans notre pays, nous avons des routes excellentes aussi bien en plain qu'en montagne, et en Espagne, ils n'ont que des sentiers qui ne sont accessibles qu'aux mules et aux ânes.”<sup>67</sup>

**Appendix C: Imbert on the Spanish state's finances**

“Chaque loterie rapporte 25 pour 100 au budget. Certes, l'Espagne, qui se débat entre la banqueroute et le cours forcé du papier-monnaie a grand besoin de telles sommes ; mais elle devrait les puiser à des sources moins impures. On a dit de ses finances qu'elles étaient la bouteille à l'encre. Il eût été plus juste de comparer les caisses de son Trésor au tonneau des Danaïdes. A peine sont-elles au quart remplies, qu'elles se vident... dans la poche des ministres.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Talleyrand-Périgord, *Rapport sur L'Instruction Publique*, 94-95.

<sup>67</sup> Sarrasi, *L'Espagne d'Aujourd'hui*, 271.

<sup>68</sup> Imbert, *L'Espagne, splendeurs et misères*, 310.