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## Operationalizing and Reconstructing the Theory of Nationalism

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## Abstract

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*This paper contributes to the elaboration of a unified theory of how nations are constructed. It identifies four types of mechanisms that have been posited in the literature, and tests them as explanatory hypotheses about the forces behind nationalism and the processes of nation formation in the context of Catalonia in Spain. The four mechanism types are as follows: first, a bottom-up process; second, a process stemming largely from different sorts of middle classes; third, an elite-driven process characterized by a divide and rule dynamic; and fourth, a process driven by the dynamics of globalization, which we will call nation-formation from without. The paper finds that in Catalonia, "nation formation" has been a process triggered by political elites, teachers, and provincial bureaucrats, who together have (a) co-opted local economic elites and (b) made use of federal institutional structures to activate ethnic militancy among the region's native lower middle strata.*

## Resumen

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*Este artículo contribuye a la elaboración de una teoría unificada de cómo se construyen las naciones. Identifica cuatro tipos de mecanismos que han sido elaborados en la literatura, y los prueba como las hipótesis explicativas sobre las fuerzas detrás del nacionalismo y los procesos de formación de la nación en el contexto de Cataluña en España. Los cuatro tipos del mecanismo son como sigue: primero, un proceso desde las clases bajas a la élite; segundo, un proceso que proviene principalmente de las diferentes clases medias; tercero, un proceso manejado por la élite caracterizado por dinámica de dividir y gobernar; y cuarto, un proceso manejado por la dinámica de la globalización, que nosotros llamaremos formación nacional "desde afuera". El artículo demuestra que en Cataluña la "formación de la nación" ha sido un proceso activado por las élites políticas, maestros y burócratas provincianos, que juntos (a) co-optaron a las élites económicas locales y (b) utilizaron las estructuras institucionales federales para activar la militancia étnica entre la baja clase media nativa de la región.*



## Introduction

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The thrust of the major voices in the theory of nationalism is in favor of the view that nations are constructed rather than primordial. There is an emerging scholarly consensus that nations are “created”, whether they be “imagined”, to use the coinage of Benedict Anderson (1991), or “invented”, following the idiom of Ernest Gellner (1983) and Eric Hobsbawm (1990). What unifies this scholarly consensus is the rejection of the view that nations are a sort of natural kind or are otherwise natural social facts. While this claim is controversial, the relatively new literature on nations and nationalism emerged against the backdrop of the view that belief-mediated social facts cannot be plausibly conceptualized as somehow given. It is difficult to find in the older literature on nationalism any such strong claim about the “naturalness” of nations and nationalism.<sup>1</sup> One problem with the contemporary scholarly consensus is thus that it seems original only in relation to what, upon inspection, is clearly a straw-man enemy.<sup>2</sup> Our focus in this paper, however, is an even more important problem with the new consensus on nationalism. There are several components of this consensus, to be sure, indeed some tensions within its exponents’ work, but there has been little empirical-analytic operationalization of the mechanisms by which nations are formed.

Rather than take the usual approach to the literature on nationalism and focus on the differences between the main contending contributors to the emerging new theory of nationalism, in this paper we will take an ecumenical approach. The purpose is thus to advance the knowledge of nationalism, by contributing to the further elaboration of a unified theory of how nations are constructed and to test some of the main hypotheses within the emergent constructivist consensus.

Before testing for the existence of the different types of mechanisms hypothesized from *within* the constructivist view, let us begin by distinguishing among a few different ways that the term *constructivism* itself can be construed. The core of the constructivist claim is simply that nations are modern constructs, that have been formed through complex historical,

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<sup>1</sup> For example, nowhere can such “primordialist” assumptions readily be found in Kohn (1944), Deutsch (1953), nor Kedourie (1960). For that matter, not even Shils (1981) nor Geertz (1973), to mention the two most prominent theorists of “primordialism”, would have denied that “nations” are “social constructs”, or that they are “imagined communities”. Geertz writes: “By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the ‘givens’ –or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the *assumed* ‘givens’– of social existence” (p. 259).

<sup>2</sup> This point is not meant to deny that, as a matter of political practice, activists and ideologues have frequently appealed to “primordialist” conceptions of the nation and of national belonging. Rather, it is to suggest that the contemporary scholarly consensus contradicts the categories of political practice much more so than it does the previous generation of scholarly analysis. On the importance of the distinction between categories of practice and categories for analysis, see Bourdieu (1990). For a similar line of argument to Bourdieu’s, explicitly applied to the theory of nationalism, see Brubaker (1996).

social, and political processes; and whose salience cannot be accounted for by the alleged strength of primordial bonds of common descent or “blood ties”. It is important to stress, however, that to endorse this constructivist claim does not require us to reject the possibility that nationalist ideologues can and often do propagate conceptions of national belonging construed in “primordialist terms” —as Anthony Smith (1999), who has championed the notion of “ethno-symbolism”, has rightly emphasized. However, as Benedict Anderson (1991) and Juan Linz (1985) have both also rightly emphasized, so too can there arise significant tensions between “primordialism” and “nationalism” as *conflicting* ideologies. This is particularly the case in contexts where nationalist partisans are forced to confront sociological realities of demographic diversity, and where the prospects of building a local majority in favor of their aspirations via violent ethnic cleansing appear either far-fetched or otherwise undesirable. In such contexts, nationalists can and often do repudiate “primordialist” conceptions of group belonging, and come to espouse an “open” conception of national belonging instead.

Data available for the Spanish regions of Catalonia and the Basque Country proves illuminating in this regard (Linz, 1985). What is striking in both contexts is the extent to which those who identify most with these respective regions have come to explicitly reject “primordialist” conceptions of group belonging. However, even though, as a matter of ideology, regional-nationalists in Catalonia and the Basque Country tend to reject “primordialist” conceptions of regional group belonging, as a matter of sociological reality, it is equally striking (though perhaps less surprising) the extent to which support for regional-nationalist aspirations is in fact correlated with the possession of “ascriptive” traits.

Nevertheless, it is important to stress that such evidence about the “ascriptive” or “primordial” bases of support for nationalism does not cut against the core of the constructivist claim. To the contrary, the theorists within the constructivist consensus are of course well aware of such “ascriptive” bases of support. What makes their theories “constructivist” is their insistence upon two points. First, the constructivist consensus holds that many such traits are themselves relatively recent artifacts.<sup>3</sup> Second, the consensus holds that regardless of how recent they are, only under certain conditions do such traits come to be politicized, i.e. only in certain circumstances do such traits become salient as sources of political mobilization, legitimization or contestation. The “mechanisms” of nation-formation whose existence are hypothesized within the constructivist camp

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<sup>3</sup> Strictly speaking, the debate over the ontological status of nations as “constructed” should be distinguished from the related argument over how new (or modern) a phenomenon nationalism is. Anderson, Gellner and Hobsbawm, on the one side, and Anthony D. Smith (especially in his earlier work, 1987), on the other, tend to think of the two issues as if they were the same. However, it is possible to be a “constructivist” on the question of ontological status without being a “modernist” on the historical question of when the phenomenon of nationalism first took root.

can thus best be conceived as specifications of the particular conditions in which the politicization of ethnic traits comes to be triggered.

Having clarified the core of the constructivist claim, we are ready to proceed. To begin with, we will identify four types of specific mechanisms that have been posited in the literature, and we will test them as explanatory hypotheses about the forces behind nationalism and the processes of nation formation. The four mechanism types are as follows: first, a bottom-up process, which we will call nation-formation from below; second, a process stemming largely from different sorts of middle classes, which we will call nation-formation from the middle; third, an elite-driven process characterized by a divide and rule dynamic, which we will call nation-formation from above; and fourth, a process driven by the dynamics of globalization, which we will call nation-formation from without.

In addition to contributing to the operationalization of the emergent constructivist theory of nationalism, we also intend to contribute to the construction of the theory itself, taking it from its current condition of a vague scholarly consensus to the higher scientific plane of an actual hypothesis-generating theory. Moreover, in so doing, we also hone in on the under-emphasized *political* dimension of the phenomena of nations and nationalism. To date, the theory of nationalism has remained unduly historical and sociological, rather than political. The explicitly *political* dimension has been missing from the theory of nationalism. With the partial exception of the recent intervention by Mark Beissinger (2002), one searches in vain through the burgeoning literature on nationalism for an account that puts political factors at center stage, treating them as crucial intervening and causal variables. Not only does the literature ignore the impact of political entrepreneurship, but discussion about opportunities provided by different political structures has also been almost entirely absent.

We intend to correct the depoliticizing bias within constructivism by stressing in our account how the structure of political opportunities partly constitutes the overall constellation of power relations within which nationalist political movements can emerge and do develop. More specifically, focusing on Catalonia, we emphasize that "nation formation" (by which we mean, in this case, the process of hegemonic entrenchment of the regional-nationalist movement at the regional level) has been a process triggered by political elites, teachers, and provincial bureaucrats, who together have (a) co-opted local economic elites and (b) made use of federal institutional structures in order to activate ethnic militancy, or consciousness of ethnic capital, among the region's native lower middle strata, thus fostering a core constituency of support for their expanding ideological agenda. Here we join hands with the new generation of developing-country experts, such as Kanchan Chandra (2006) and Daniel Posner (2004), who have made similar inroads in the study of ethnicity.

## 1. *Basic Background on Catalonia*

Let us begin by briefly familiarizing the reader with some basic background for our critical case. Catalonia is a region in the northeast of Spain, with close to 7,000,000 inhabitants. It is the birthplace of the Catalan language — a language with a long and rich literary tradition. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, a cultural revival of that literary tradition took place, which preceded and fueled the birth of a regional-nationalist movement (Vicens, 1958; Fontana, 1998). In the first three decades of the twentieth century, that movement managed to win for Catalonia a limited degree of autonomy. First, at the tail end of the Restoration monarchy, between 1914 and 1923; and then again throughout the period of the Second Republic, between 1931 and 1936 (Termes, 1987). On both occasions, the region's self-governing institutions were abolished after right-wing military coups leading to the instauration of quasi-fascist dictatorships. The second of these, led by General Francisco Franco, the victor of the bloody Spanish Civil War, would prove particularly long lasting (until after Franco's death in November of 1975). Throughout its existence, the Franco regime would consistently promote a unitary nationalist conception of the Spanish state, and in accordance with this conception, it would pursue policies of linguistic and cultural repression in Catalonia, including measures such as the prohibition of the Catalan language from all spheres of public life (Benet, 1978). Such measures alienated broad segments of Catalan society from the regime. Indeed, by the end of the Franco era, the Spain-wide democratic opposition *as a whole* had come to identify at least somewhat with regional-nationalist aspirations in Catalonia and the Basque Country (and to a lesser extent, Galicia) for recognition of linguistic, cultural and national differences and even for some degree of self-determination. In the transition to democracy, the drafters of the 1978 Constitution took many of these aspirations into account. Articles 2, 3.2, and 3.3 of that Constitution include recognition of linguistic, cultural, and even some degree of national pluralism. Moreover, Title VIII of the Constitution outlines procedural mechanisms for the devolution of powers and the creation of regional *Autonomías*, or self-governing communities. Such official recognition of linguistic, cultural, and national plurality was further enshrined with the passing of regional Statutes of Autonomy, starting in 1979. As a consequence, although the Constitutional prescriptions are not explicitly federal, they have allowed for the emergence of a *de facto* asymmetrical federal state (Miley, 2006).

Since the transition to democracy in Spain, successive regional governments in Catalonia have used their autonomy over cultural and educational matters in order to pursue a host of relatively ambitious policies of so-called "linguistic normalization" and "national reconstruction". More

recently, moreover, they have come to challenge as inadequate the level of autonomy granted by the Constitutional framework.

The achievements of the nationalist movement are striking enough in their own right; what makes them more impressive still is that they have been achieved in a *democratic* context against a demographic backdrop in Catalonia that, at least on the surface, would seem unpropitious –given the high percentage of the population that hails from other regions in Spain. Indeed, in the late-nineties, over a third of the population had been born outside of the region, and approximately half of the population spoke Castilian, not Catalan, as its first language (Termes, 1984; Woolard, 1989). The steady advance of the nationalist agenda in the post-transition period, against the context of such demographic diversity, its successes on the cultural and linguistic front, and particularly the recent escalation of territorial demands, all seem to suggest that what we are witnessing in Catalonia is the “birth” of a nation, or at least a very effective process of nation formation.

One thing that makes this process of nation formation underway today in Catalonia particularly appealing for the social scientific community is the fact that it is one of the few places with a relative abundance of the right kind of empirical data. Specifically, a whole host of questions about national identity and about attitudes towards nationalist aspirations have been repeatedly asked, allowing us to observe and track in rather precise detail the process of nation formation as experienced by the general population.<sup>4</sup> But even in Spain, good data at the level of political elites and for other actors whose role should be theorized as crucial can be hard to come by. Generating such data is one of the things one of us spent a lot of effort doing during field research in Catalonia. While there, we managed to conduct over 400 randomly-sampled and stratified interviews, including 187 municipal and regional level politicians, and 168 primary and secondary schoolteachers, in which we asked both open-ended and closed-ended questions. This original data provides an important complement to the data we possess for the public at large.

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<sup>4</sup> The first major public opinion surveys in Spain included several questions related to national identity. These surveys were conducted by Juan Linz and his collaborators at DATA, and were published in the *Informe sociológico sobre el cambio político en España, 1975-1981. Fundación Foessa, IV Informe Foessa* (1981). In addition, from the mid-eighties through the present, the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* has conducted hundreds of surveys that include many such questions as well. Finally, from 1989 forward, the *Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials* has likewise conducted yearly surveys with several pertinent questions.

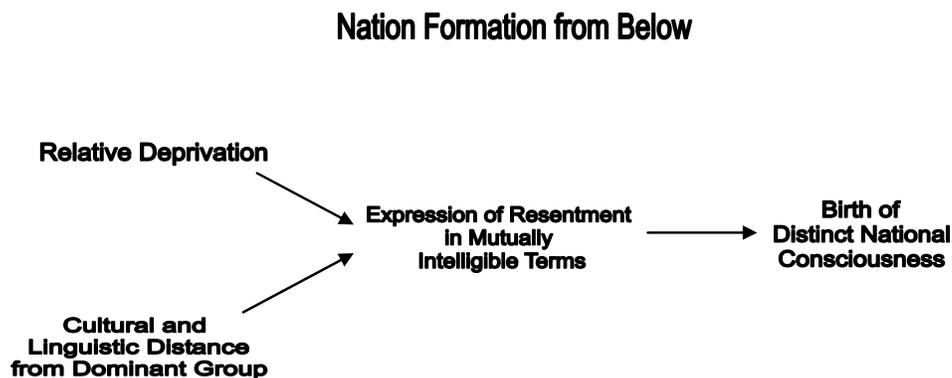
## 2. Identifying and Testing Mechanisms

We are now ready to identify four types of mechanisms of nation formation that can be hypothesized within the constructivist consensus, and to test whether there is evidence for their existence in the context of Catalonia.

### 2.1. The Bottom-Up Mechanism of Nation Formation

The first mechanism we will consider is one proposed by both Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner. We can label it a “grass roots, bottom-up” mechanism of nation-formation (see figure 1).

FIGURE 1



According to Gellner, for example, in contexts of industrialization, the experience of relative material deprivation can trigger the formation of distinct national consciousness among systematically disadvantaged linguistic groups. This is specifically because these groups “are able to express their resentments and discontents in intelligible terms” (1983, p. 62). Is there any evidence for the existence of such a mechanism in the context of Catalonia? The answer is that there is very little evidence.

For starters, the capital of Catalonia, Barcelona, has traditionally been the industrial motor of Spain, and Catalonia has therefore long been a comparatively overdeveloped region within the Spanish State. Moreover, even though over the past twenty years the comparatively backward regions of the country have made leaps and bounds in catching up, to this day, the Catalan economy remains one of the most important components of the overall Spanish economy, and Catalonia itself remains one of the richest regions in Spain. As recently as 2001, the region, which made up 15.4% of Spain’s total population, was responsible for 19.4% of its overall GDP, and Catalonia’s per capita GDP stood at 123% in comparison with the per capita GDP for the entire

country (Fundación BBVA, 2002). This basic fact of historical overdevelopment should be sufficient to render us skeptical about the existence of such a bottom-up, “anti-internal-colonial” mechanism of nation formation in Catalonia (Hechter, 1975).

Even so, one might still be tempted to look closer, by asking “How about the relative position of those who identify most with Catalonia within the region more generally?” Do *they* constitute a relatively-deprived group? If so, perhaps the bottom-up, “anti-internal-colonial” hypothesis could be confirmed. As it turns out, however, not only does Catalonia constitute a comparatively wealthy region in Spain, but those who identify most with Catalonia themselves constitute a *comparatively-advantaged group* within Catalan society. The comparatively-advantaged position of “Catalanists” within Catalonia is evident regardless of whether we calculate such advantage in terms of occupation, in terms of education or in terms of income.

As such, the concentration of Catalan national sentiment among those who are economically and socially advantaged, and its relative scarcity at the lower end of advantage spectra, could hardly be more clear (see figure 2).

**FIGURE 2. EVIDENCE AGAINST NATION FORMATION FROM BELOW IN CATALONIA**

Catalonia makes up 15.4% of Spain’s overall population, but is responsible for fully 19.4 of its overall GDP.  
 Per Capita GDP in Catalonia stands at 123% of the “national” average for Spain.  
 Ascriptive Catalans Constitute a Comparatively-Advantaged Group within Catalan Society Itself:

**THE OVERLAP OF CLASS AND ASCRIPTIVE CLEAVAGES IN CATALONIA**

		CAPITALISTS	PETTY BOURG	MANAG	EXPERT	HIGH-SKILLED WORKER	PROLETARIAT	N
TOTAL		4.3	17.1	6.3	7.9	22.8	41.6	(1004)
MOTHER TONGUE	SPANISH	2.1	12.3	6.6	7.0	22.8	49.2	(575)
	CATALAN	7.4	23.9	6.2	8.9	23.2	30.5	(406)
ASCEND GROUPS	IMM	1.5	14.5	6.0	3.6	17.8	56.5	(331)
	1 <sup>ST</sup> GEN	2.9	12.7	6.4	8.7	27.2	42.2	(173)
	MIXED	5.5	9.4	7.1	11.8	33.1	33.1	(127)
	NATIVES	7.0	24.2	5.9	9.9	21.8	31.2	(372)

Source: CIS Study #2298 (1998). Class categories have been broken down in accordance with the criteria of Erik Olin Wright (1997), Calculated by Enric Martínez.

While this evidence is clearly persuasive, it should nonetheless not lead us to dismiss altogether the operation of a bottom-up mechanism of nation

formation in Catalonia. Gellner's formulation of the bottom-up argument might lead us to do so too quickly. He treats political and economic rulers as if they had to belong to one and the same "cultural" group. This is far too simple a picture of societal differentiation within modern societies. In empirical reality, we know that this does not have to be the case - particularly when the political and economic centers of a state do not coincide, as they traditionally have not in Spain. As we have seen, the Catalans in Spain live in a region and belong to a group that remains comparatively-advantaged in terms of economic power, but at the same time, they have been comparatively-disadvantaged in terms of political power *vis-à-vis* the central state. Since the transition to democracy at the Spain level, their comparative-advantage in terms of economic power has decreased somewhat; but simultaneously, as a result of the central state's project of federalizing devolution, their comparative-disadvantage in terms of political power has been ameliorated as well. Such a comparative deficit in terms of political power has historically left the Catalans' vulnerable to some kinds of discrimination, despite their comparative advantage in terms of economic power. The clearest examples of this were the policies of linguistic and cultural repression that included the wholesale proscription of the use of the Catalan language in the public sphere, and that were pursued most vigorously by the Franco regime. The Franquists embarked upon these policies as part of a project of Spanish nation formation. While in some ways a success, the Franquist project also backfired, as it alienated broad segments of Catalan society from the regime, and thereby helped trigger a reactive process of Catalan nation formation as well.

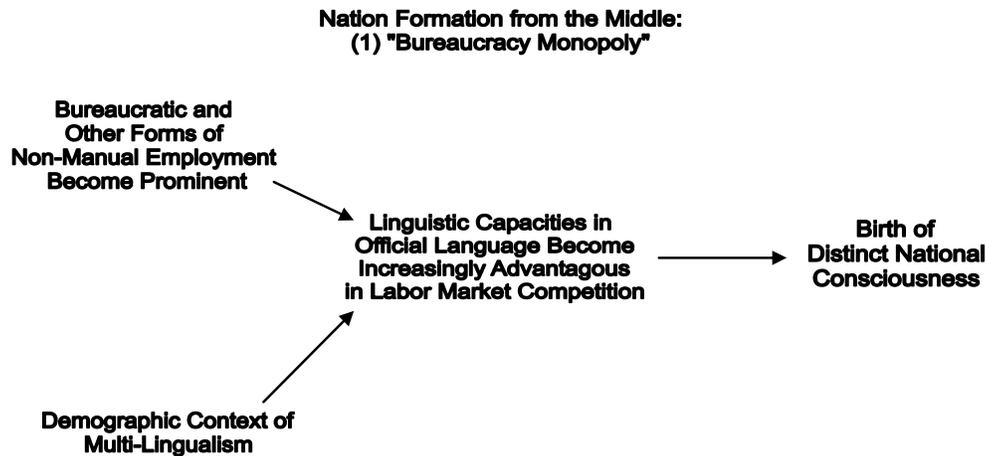
As such, then, even though we can dismiss the existence of the "bottom-up", "anti-internal colonial" mechanism of nation formation if we calculate relative deprivation in economic and sociological terms alone; there does nevertheless appear to be some evidence of such a mechanism at work in Catalonia, so long as we calculate relative deprivation in political and symbolic terms as well. Doubtless, it would be difficult to understand the impressive mobilizational capacity of the Catalan nationalist movement in the region without factoring in the convictions, indeed the indignation, about past political and symbolic injustice that motivate regional-nationalist activists. So too, for that matter, would it be difficult to understand the reluctance by any of the main political parties operating in the orbit of the Spanish left to mobilize *opposition* to either the Catalan or the Basque regional-nationalists.

## 2.2. A First Mechanism of Nation-Formation from the Middle: Bureaucracy Monopoly

We are now ready to turn to examine a second type of mechanism of nation-formation that can be hypothesized in accordance with the constructivist consensus -which can be grouped under the rubric of "nation-formation from

the middle". Within this type, we will consider two specific mechanisms –first, a “bureaucracy monopoly” mechanism and second, an “education-indoctrination” mechanism. Let us begin with the bureaucracy monopoly mechanism (see figure 3).

FIGURE 3



All three of the primary theorists within the constructivist consensus invoke some version of this mechanism in their accounts. Gellner, for example, alludes to it when he argues that “when [the prospect of] bureaucratic employment became [a] prominent feature within the social horizons [of Ruritanian displaced former peasants] ... this concrete experience taught them to be aware of their culture and to love it” (1983, p. 61). Likewise, Anderson also alludes to a similar mechanism when, in discussing nationalist “awakening” in the mid-nineteenth century in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he mentions: “The replacement of Latin by *any* vernacular, in the mid-nineteenth century promised enormous advantages to those of its subjects who *already* used that print language” (1991, p. 78). Finally, Hobsbawm, too, implicitly refers to such labor market mechanisms, when he insists that between 1878 and 1918: “The classes which stood or fell by the official use of the written vernacular were the socially modest but educated middle strata, which included those who acquired lower middle-class status precisely by virtue of occupying non-manual jobs that required schooling”. He continues: “The battle-lines of linguistic nationalism were manned by provincial journalists, schoolteachers, and aspiring subaltern officials”. And he concludes: “Linguistic nationalism cannot be fully understood... unless we see the vernacular language as, among other things, a vested interest of the lesser examination-passing classes. Moreover, each step giving the vernacular greater official standing, especially as a teaching language, multiplied the

number of men and women who could have a share in this vested interest" (1990, pp. 117-118).

As such, according to Gellner, Anderson, and Hobsbawm, the prospects of bureaucratic and other forms of non-manual employment can trigger nation formation, specifically by transforming cultural and especially linguistic traits into advantages or disadvantages in labor market competition for these posts.

There is plenty of evidence for the existence of this mechanism in the context of Catalonia. A look at the content of current linguistic legislation in the region provides a good starting place to sample this abundant evidence. For such legislation has been at the center of the political agenda promoted by regional-nationalist organizations in Catalonia ever since the transition to democracy in Spain, devolution, and the creation of a quasi-federal state (Argelequet, 1996; Calzadi and Llorens, 1995; Bel, 1991; Weber and Strubell, 1991; Miley, 2006). This legislation explicitly enshrines a host of linguistic prerequisites for posts in the public sphere. Witness the second article of the most recent major piece of such legislation, the 1998 *Llei de Política Lingüística*, which reads:

*2.1. Catalan is the llengua pròpia of Catalonia. It distinguishes Catalonia as a poble.*

*2.2. As the llengua pròpia, Catalan is:*

- a. The language of all the institutions of Catalonia, and especially of the administration of the Generalitat, the local administration, public corporations, of public businesses and public services, institutional media, the educational system, and place names.*
- b. The language preferentially employed by the State Administration in Catalonia, by other institutions, and in general, by businesses and entities that offer public services.*

This legislation goes on to include detailed guidelines for a system of examinations by which competence in the local language must be proven in order to qualify for posts in the aforementioned public domains. It includes, furthermore, a host of sanctions for businesses in the private sphere should they fail to comply with a so-called principle of *habilitat lingüística* as well. Needless to say, all these measures effectively favor the employment prospects of those who can speak the local language and who belong, to quote Hobsbawm again, to "the lesser examination passing classes".

More evidence in favor of the operation of this mechanism can be found by turning to look more closely at the ethno-linguistic composition of the bureaucracy in Catalonia itself. For one, Alfonso de Alfonso found in a 1982 study that the percentage of high-level functionaries employed in the then-new Catalan regional administration stood at fully 82%, and by 1996, Jordi Matas found that that percentage had risen even further, to 90% (Matas,

1996). A similar pattern can be found with teachers. In a classic study titled *Estudios sobre cambio social y estructuras sociales en Cataluña*, Esteban Pinilla de las Heras found that in 1975, the year the Franco died, fully 63% of male teachers and 42% of female teachers in primary schools had been born outside of Catalonia (Pinilla de las Heras, 1979). By contrast, in 2001, after nearly twenty years of “linguistic normalization,” which has focused in particular on the educational system, we found that the proportion of male teachers born outside of the region had dropped fully 26%, to 37% overall, while the proportion of female teachers born outside of the region had also dropped, in this case 28%, to a mere 14% overall.

These numbers lend additional support to the hypothesis that the “bureaucracy monopoly” mechanism of nation-formation is operational in the Catalan context. Such indirect evidence that the battle-lines of nation formation are being manned by provincial bureaucrats and schoolteachers can be further reinforced by turning to look at identity profiles as well as attitudes towards specific nationalist policies.

As such, the content of linguistic legislation spearheaded by nationalist organizations in Catalonia, the ethno-linguistic profiles of local bureaucrats and schoolteachers, and their subjective identity profiles, all seem to corroborate the hypothesis that the prospects of bureaucratic and other forms of non-manual employment can trigger nation formation, specifically by transforming cultural and especially linguistic traits into advantages in labor market competition (see figure 4).

**FIGURE 4. EVIDENCE IN FAVOR OF NATION FORMATION FROM THE MIDDLE IN CATALONIA  
(1) BUREAUCRACY MONOPOLY**

**(A) SELF-IDENTIFICATION IN CATALONIA, BY "MOTHER TONGUE"**

	CASTILIAN	BOTH	CATALAN	TOTAL
SPANISH	27.8	7.1	1.3	13.6
MORE SPANISH	10.7	9	1.3	5.9
AS SPANISH	43.2	44.9	20.2	31.8
MORE CATALAN	13.1	22.4	41.8	27.5
CATALAN	3.6	14.1	34.4	19.4
DK/DA	1.6	2.6	1	1.7
TOTAL	100	100.1	100	99.9
N	(1194)	(156)	(1346)	(2778)

Source: CIS #2410 (2001).

**(B) THE IDEOLOGICAL PROFILES OF THE PUBLIC VS THE TEACHERS**

	GENERAL PUBLIC	TEACHERS	CATALAN- SPEAKING PUBLIC	CATALAN- SPEAKING TEACHERS
% REGISTERING A PREDOM- CATALAN IDENTITY	46.9	62.2	76.2	91.1
% THAT CONSIDERS CATALONIA A NATION	37.5	73.9	55.6	89
% PREFERRING SCHOOL PREDOMINANTLY IN CAT	42.0	78.0	67.3	87.6
% THAT JUDGES LINGUISTIC POLICY INSUFFICIENT	9.7	29.3	NA	50.6
% IN FAVOR OF INDEPENDENCE	35.9	51.9	NA	78.7
N	(2778)	(164)	(1346)	(90)

Source for public: CIS #2410 (2001) and #2298 (1998).

**(C) THE SHIFTING ETHNO-LINGUISTIC PROFILES OF "PROVINCIAL"  
BUREAUCRATS AND TEACHERS**

"PROVINCIAL" BUREAUCRATS								
YEAR	1982				1996			
% BORN IN CAT	82			NA	90			NA
TEACHERS								
YEAR	1975				2001			
	MALE	FEMALE	OVERALL	N	MALE	FEMALE	OVERALL	N
% BORN IN CAT	37	58	52	NA	63	86	73.5	(166)

Sources: Matas (1996); Pinilla de las Heras (1978).

Now, whether the activation of this mechanism depends on conscious cost-benefit calculations is itself a matter of some dispute. Gellner, for one, vehemently denies that this is the case. He writes: "It would be genuinely wrong to try to reduce these sentiments to calculations of material advantage or of social mobility" (1983, p. 61). One might think that not a lot hinges on the existence of individual-level conscious calculations. In other words, one might think that whether such identities and preferences are *actually* the product of rational calculation or, rather, they just *seem* to be need not detain us too much here.

It is important to stress, however, that in our judgment the teachers (as well as politicians) whom we personally interviewed and who registered ideal-typical regional-nationalist responses did not themselves appear to us to be so cynical. On the contrary, the ideal-typical regional-nationalists seemed to be "true believers" who were passionate and genuinely convinced about the justness of the national cause.

Herein lies a frequently-overlooked part of the power of ideology —the power to provide people with the conviction that the pursuit of their particular interests is at the same time the struggle for the collective good. This kind of power is distinct from ideology's more-often emphasized power, either (a) to get people to act against their own "objective" interests (as theorized by many orthodox Marxists), or (b) to actually "constitute" their interests [as theorized by many neo-Weberians, such as Rogers Smith (2003), with his notion of "ethically-constitutive" stories]. For indeed, what seemed most striking about regional-nationalist schoolteachers (and politicians) whom we interviewed was their expressed hostility to any attempt to link patriotic convictions to either labor market advantages or, for that matter, to any other form of economic interests. This was so even though some kind of link between the two seemed patently obvious from a political-sociological perspective. The courage of such convictions, coming from deeply held beliefs about past political and symbolic oppression, in combination with the pursuit of particular interests, can do much to facilitate effective mobilization, especially among groups that are in fact materially-advantaged.

### 2.3. A Second Mechanism of Nation-Formation from the Middle: Education-Indoctrination

An important point about the role of schoolteachers in the "national" movement follows from our preceding discussion —one that brings us to consider a second mechanism of nation-formation from the middle, so to speak, and whose existence has also been hypothesized by theorists within the constructivist consensus: namely, the mechanism of nation-formation through "educational indoctrination." Gellner theorizes about the existence of this mechanism when, for example, he insists, albeit perhaps hyperbolically: "At the base of the modern social order stands not the

executioner but the professor. Not the guillotine but the (aptly named) *doctorat d'état* is the main tool and symbol of state power. The monopoly of legitimate education is now more important, more central than is the monopoly of legitimate violence" (1983, p. 34) (see figure 5).

FIGURE 5

**Nation Formation from the Middle:  
(2) "Education Indoctrination"**



Just how much evidence is there for the existence of this mechanism in the context of Catalonia? For starters, we can say with relative certainty that, regardless of whether the education indoctrination mechanism has proven an effective catalyst for nation formation, many committed schoolteachers in particular and activists in the organized nationalist movement more generally clearly believe in its existence. So too do their most strident opponents. The nationalist movement at the time of the transition focused much of its energy on the issue of control over the schools. The often intense political battles that have ensued since then, both over the content of the curriculum and over the language of instruction, are best understood against this backdrop. The majority of teachers' genuine ideological commitment to the "nation-building" project underway in the region can thus hardly be under-estimated. Many of them conceive of their pedagogic vocation for today in terms of consciousness raising, that is, in terms of creating "good, patriotic Catalans" for tomorrow.

Is there, however, any other evidence for the existence of the education indoctrination mechanism of nation formation apart from the convictions of committed teachers and regional-nationalists more generally, as well as those of their most strident opponents? It turns out that such evidence does exist.

To begin with, as we have already seen, the more education one has, the more likely he or she is to register a predominantly Catalan identity. The concentration of "Catalan national sentiment" among those with higher levels of education, and its relative scarcity among those at the lower end, could hardly be clearer. Still, one might think that the relation captured in such a simple cross-tab is in fact spurious —given in particular the clearly uneven access to educational opportunities across the region's main ethno-linguistic ascendancy groups. However, when we control for such factors by running a multi-variate regression, where subjective identity is the dependent variable,

and both ascendancy groups and mother tongue are treated as possible independent variables alongside education, we find that, though the impact of education is less than both mother tongue and ascendancy, it nevertheless remains significant at the .001 level.

As such, it seems that neither the teachers in particular nor the activists in the nationalist movement more generally are deceiving themselves in their beliefs about the existence of an education indoctrination mechanism of nation formation (see figure 6).

**FIGURE 6. EVIDENCE IN FAVOR OF NATION FORMATION FROM THE MIDDLE IN CATALONIA**

**(2) EDUCATION INDOCTRINATION**

% REGISTERING PREDOMINANTLY-CATALAN IDENTITIES, BY EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION	49.7
ADV. SECONDARY EDUCATION	45.8
BASIC SECONDARY EDUCATION	33.3
PRIMARY EDUCATION	30.5
BASIC EDUCATION	23.2

Source: icps (2003)

**ORDINAL LOGIT REGRESSION, SELF-IDENTIFICATION AS DEPENDENT VARIABLE**

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	ODDS-RATIO	STANDARD ERROR	Z
MOTHER TONGUE	2.557***	0.170	14.13
ASCENDANCY GROUP	1.825***	0.087	12.64
<b>LEVEL OF EDUCATION</b>	<b>1.375***</b>	<b>0.074</b>	<b>5.91</b>
AGE	0.994**	0.003	-2.42
SIZE OF MUNICIPALITY	0.986	0.023	-0.58
GENDER	0.939	0.077	-0.77
R <sup>2</sup>	0.252		
N	2714		
PROB>CHI2	0.000		

Source: CIS #2410 (2001)

Let us, however, mention one important caveat about this mechanism as it operates in the Catalan context. If, as we have argued, it is implausible to reduce nationalist convictions among schoolteachers to epiphenomenal manifestations of their underlying corporatist interests, it is even more implausible to account for this education indoctrination mechanism by pointing to a functionalist necessity to create homogenous and therefore

mobile labor markets, whose participants can operate in one *lingua franca* or national tongue, as Gellner insists. The reason such a functionalist logic appears patently implausible in the Catalan context is straightforward. Long before the regional government wrested control over the educational system, a *lingua franca* had already effectively been imposed. That language was Spanish—a language that at the time of the transition (and indeed to this day), virtually all Spaniards, and virtually all Catalans were able to speak, regardless of their mother tongue. Consequently, we can conclude, the centrality of the educational system to the nation-building project underway in Catalonia cannot be explained in such functionalist terms. The Spanish state had long since managed to effectively produce the cultural prerequisites for mobile labor markets, simply because it had long since achieved *acculturation*, though not cultural assimilation, into a common *lingua franca*.<sup>5</sup>

#### 2.4. Mechanisms of Nation-Formation from Above

Note that in his depiction of the education indoctrination mechanism of nation formation, Gellner conceives of the state as doing the bidding of economic elites (though, for him, such bidding also turns out to be in the interests of the society as a whole, since the creation of mobile labor markets allegedly ultimately benefits economic elites and ordinary workers alike).

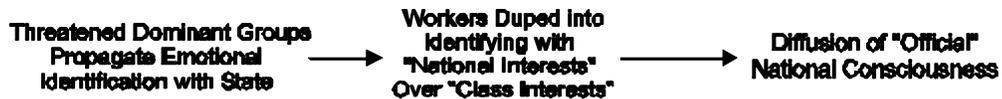
This brings us to consider another type of mechanism of nation formation hypothesized from within the constructivist consensus. This mechanism is also based on a conception of the state as doing the bidding of economic elites, but this time against the objective interests of the working class. We can label it a mechanism of nation-formation as a by-product of a “top-down”, “divide and rule” strategy among the ruling classes (or nation formation from above) (see figure 7).

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<sup>5</sup> On the distinction between “acculturation” and “assimilation”, see Barry, 2001.

FIGURE 7

**Nation Formation from Above**



This mechanism has been implicitly hypothesized by both Anderson and Hobsbawm. Anderson, for example, refers to it in his discussion of “official nationalism”. He describes official nationalism as “an anticipatory strategy adopted by [threatened] dominant groups”. Elsewhere, he refers to it as “something emanating from the state, and serving the interests of the state first and foremost” (1991, p. 101). Hobsbawm points to something similar when he remarks that, by the late nineteenth century, amidst the backdrop of the democratization of politics and the threat to the social order posed by the rise of labor and socialist movements, ruling classes realized that “[n]ationalism could become an enormously powerful asset of government if it could be integrated into state patriotism, to become its central emotional component” (1990, pp. 85-90).

Note that both Anderson and Hobsbawm here clearly equate “dominant groups” in general with “the state” in particular, as if the two necessarily coincided. However, as we have already stressed, “economic” and “political” power do not always coincide. Following Jaume Vicens Vives, much of the classic historiography has long stressed that the initial birth of the nationalist movement in Catalonia, and the initial phase of nation formation there, were not triggered by a dominant group’s strategy of “divide and rule”. The initial phase of nation formation seems to have been triggered instead by a division among dominant groups themselves (Vicens, 1958). More precisely, the process was largely triggered by an *intra-elite* conflict –between the Spanish state, on the one hand, and Catalonia’s rising industrial bourgeoisie, on the other. The industrial bourgeoisie became increasingly frustrated with their failure to get the state to represent their interests, as the state seemed more interested in promoting the advantage of agrarian elites. The Catalan industrial bourgeoisie thus began to think that a more effective solution to their problems could be found by going their own way –that is, through some form of regional autonomy, at least, if not outright secession.

But what about in the contemporary period, especially since the transition to democracy? How do economic elites in Catalonia relate to the nationalist agenda now? Do they constitute an important component of the nationalist

core constituency, alongside provincial bureaucrats and teachers? More pointedly, have they triggered nation formation by using nationalist ideology as part of a strategy to divide and rule? Or, alternatively, are they indifferent towards, or even at odds with, any or all of the nationalist aspirations?

The evidence on this score is somewhat mixed. As we have already seen (point out where), liberal professionals and businessmen have been consistently more receptive to nationalism than have their counterparts among the industrial working class and the post-industrial low-end service class, not to mention the ample ranks of the unemployed (see figure eight).

This evidence is counterbalanced somewhat by a host of other considerations. Another look at language policy in Catalonia again proves illuminating in this regard. The difficulties that the regional government has encountered in its attempt to extend the scope of linguistic regulation into the private sphere contrasts to its relative success in the public sphere and especially in the schools. As Josep Maria Cortés, a journalist for *El País*, has sized up the situation: “Catalan businessmen have their heart torn: their political instinct pushes them to approve of the defense of the Catalan language, but their commercial sense pulls them to be wary of the economic viability of ‘Catalanization’ outside the public administration” (*El País*, Oct. 5, 1997).

Throughout the eighties and nineties, the Catalan government consistently confronted reluctance on the part of Catalan companies in its attempts to get them to change their signs from Castilian into the region’s *llengua pròpia*. Miguel Angel Fraile, the head of the Confederation of Catalan Commerce at the time, would argue: “Look, we are all for the ‘normalization’ of Catalan; but in these tough economic times, we have to make sure that this does not mean incurring additional costs” (*El País*, Nov. 14, 1993). The regional government’s response to such concerns was, of course, recourse to subsidies.

Such measures were not sufficient to rid businessmen of their reluctance. In fact, such reluctance would occasionally be transformed into outright resistance —as would occur when the government announced its intention to ensure that all products produced and sold in Catalonia be labeled in Catalan. This announcement provoked protest from the Association of Catalan Food and Drink Industries (ATABECA), as well as the employers’ association, *Foment de Treball* and the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce. Their concern: again, cost increases (*El País*, Oct. 5, 1997). Protests notwithstanding, the government would forge ahead as planned. Article 34.2 of the 1998 Law of Linguistic Policy (LPL) states:

*Obligatory data and additional voluntary information that figure on the labels of Catalan products... distributed in Catalan territories must necessarily be, at least, in Catalan.*

Businessmen have had to swallow the measure; but this has produced a fair share of indigestion, so to speak. A board member of the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce recently grumbled: "Too often the Catalan government strays from the criterion of economic efficiency... The decree requiring labeling in Catalan, based on the Law of Linguistic Policy, is a case in point" (*El País*, March 28, 2000).

As such, we can conclude that considerations of economic efficiency have served as a break on Catalan businessmen's support for linguistic regulation as soon as such regulation extends beyond the public administration and begins to affect them directly. More generally, we can infer from such evidence: that (1) the business community is not the core constituency for nationalist aspirations, even though it has been somewhat sympathetic to their goals; and that (2) when the business community has ceased to support specific nationalist policies, the implementation of these policies has run into considerable obstacles.

Does this therefore mean that we should dismiss the existence of a "top-down" mechanism of nation-formation outright? To do so would be to commit the same theoretical error that we have already highlighted by defining the "top" in terms of economic power alone. When we compare the profiles and attitudes of Catalan *political* elites from each of the main parties in the region, we see evidence of a definite top-down dynamic at work (see figure 9).

**FIGURE 9. THE CONTRASTING PROFILES OF DISTINCT ELECTORATES AND THEIR "REPRESENTATIVES"**

THE SOCIALISTS (PSC-PSOE)	PSC ELECTORATE	PSC LOCAL POLITICIANS	PSC PARLIAMENTARIANS
% THAT IS IMMIGRANT OR FIRST GENERATION	67.2	35	30.0
% WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE IS CASTILIAN	67.0	41.7	30.0
% THAT REGISTERS A PREDOMINATELY CATALAN IDENTITY	24.6	43.1	40.0
% THAT CONSIDERS CATALONIA A NATION	22.4	61.7	70.0
% THAT PREFERS FOR SCHOOL TO BE TAUGHT AT MOST HALF IN CATALAN	66.9	31.7	30.0
% THAT JUDGES LINGUISTIC POLICY TO BE EXCESSIVE OR OTHERWISE INCORRECT	56.8	36.7	25.0
(N)	(539)	(59)	(20)

THE "MODERATE" NATIONALISTS (CIU)	CIU ELECTORATE	CIU LOCAL POLITICIANS	CIU PARLIAMENTARIANS
% THAT REGISTERS AN EXCLUSIVELY CATALAN IDENTITY	23.5	66.7	68.4
% THE CONSIDERS CATALONIA A NATION	44.5	92	100
% THAT PREFERS SCHOOL TO BE TAUGHT ONLY IN CATALAN	11.6	41.6	83.3
% THAT JUDGES LINGUISTIC POLICY INSUFFICIENT	9.9	40	21.1
% IN FAVOR OF INDEPENDENCE	49.1	70.8	63.2
(N)	(906)	(24)	(19)

THE "RADICAL" NATIONALISTS (ERC)	ERC ELECTORATE	ERC LOCAL POLITICIANS	ERC PARLIAMENTARIANS
% THAT REGISTERS AN EXCLUSIVELY CATALAN IDENTITY	61.9	72.7	100
% THAT CONSIDERS CATALONIA A NATION	85.7	100	100
% THAT PREFERS SCHOOL TO BE TAUGHT ONLY IN CATALAN	35.6	63.6	50.0
% THAT JUDGES LINGUISTIC POLICY INSUFFICIENT	46.7	90.9	83.3
% IN FAVOR OF INDEPENDENCE	88.9	81.8	100
(N)	(244)	(11)	(6)

Sources for general population: CIS 2298 and 2410

## 2.5. Mechanisms of Nation-Formation from Without

To this point in our discussion, we have largely focused on mechanisms of nation-formation operative within Catalan society itself, or at least within Spain. But, one may ask, what about mechanisms that might be operative from without? Indeed, one such mechanism has been implicitly hypothesized from within the constructivist consensus. We call this a mechanism of nation formation via "globalization" (see figure 10).

Figure 10  
Nation Formation from Without



Its existence has been suggested, among others, by Eric Hobsbawm, when he reluctantly admits that “small states are today no less viable than larger states, given the decline of the ‘national economy’ before the transnational one”; and that against this backdrop, some “regions [may] constitute more rational sub-units of larger economic entities like the European Community than are the historic states which are its official members” —though he is quick to add that “there is no reason why an economic region should *ipso facto* coincide with a potential political unit constituted according to ethno-linguistic or historic criteria” (1990, p. 185). Despite this cautious addendum, Hobsbawm here is still suggesting that globalization can trigger nation formation by decreasing the usefulness in general and the interventionist capacity in particular of larger historic states, thereby diminishing centripetal forces of attraction between the state and peripheral economic elites.

Is there any evidence that a globalization mechanism of nation formation is operative in the Catalan context? Indeed, there is. Centripetal forces of attraction between the Spanish state and Catalan economic elites have in fact been declining due to a variety of mechanisms, all at least indirectly associated with “globalization”.

Before the Civil War, two basic kinds of factors, related but not reducible to considerations of economic efficiency, served as breaks on the business community’s full-fledged commitment to a regional-nationalist agenda. The first, its concern to ensure continued privileged access to the protected Spanish market; and the second, its reliance, in the last instance, upon the Spanish military to guarantee order in its conflicts with a radical and revolutionary anarchist-dominated labor movement. Since the transition to democracy, both of these breaks have been all but removed. For starters, after Spain’s integration into the European Union, access to Spanish markets, and for that matter to markets throughout all of Europe secured (Keating, 1996; Guibernau, 1999; McRoberts, 2001; Moreno, 2001). This remains the case, barring a hypothetical scenario of a unilateral declaration of total *de jure* independence (in which case either Spain or, more likely France, might well prove willing to exercise their power to veto Catalonia’s petition for re-

entry). Such ensured access to markets effectively increases the autonomy of regional-nationalist activists to pursue their ideological agenda, by reducing a crucial “centripetal carrot”, so to speak, that previously bound the Catalan business community to the Spanish state.

Furthermore, by the time the transition to democracy rolled around, the Catalan economy in particular and the Spanish economy more generally had already been in large part effectively incorporated into the capitalist core of Europe. This entailed, among other things, a dramatic reduction in the salience of class conflict, particularly compared with the pre-war period. As a result, the Catalan business community had long since ceased relying heavily upon the Spanish military to guarantee social order. Even so, for its part, important fractions in the military still conceived of their duty in such interventionist terms. What is more, the military was particularly concerned about the threat to the country’s territorial integrity as posed by the prospect of devolution, especially against the backdrop of Basque separatist, ETA violence. As a result, the latent threat of an involutionist coup by the Franquist reactionary bunker clearly conditioned the Catalan nationalist movement’s willingness to compromise with the center with respect to its maximalist agenda throughout the transitional period. However, by the mid-eighties, with the successful “modernization” of the military carried out by the Catalan socialist defense minister, Narcís Serra, and its subsequent integration into NATO structures, the threat of such a coup had already vanished (Busquets, 1999; Payne, 1986; Diez Nicolás, 1986; Powell, 2001). The disappearance of such a threat has clearly increased the autonomy of nationalist activists to pursue their maximalist ideological agenda. In a word, it has reduced a crucial centripetal stick, so to speak, that previously facilitated moderation on the part of the Catalan nationalists.

As such, mechanisms of “nation formation from without” are operative in the Catalan context in at least two respects: integration into Europe has diminished a crucial centripetal carrot previously provided by the Catalan business community’s priority of guaranteed and privileged access to Spanish markets; in addition, the modernization of the military and its integration into NATO structures has diminished a crucial “centripetal stick” previously provided by the latent threat of an involutionist military coup.

It is important to stress, however, that unlike the other mechanisms of nation formation that we have identified above, these mechanisms have only operated indirectly, i.e. insofar as they have facilitated the autonomy of political elites at the level of Catalonia to pursue their policies of nation formation.

## Summary and conclusion

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We are now ready to sum up our argument, and to draw some general theoretical conclusions. We have identified and tested four types of mechanisms of nation formation: namely, (1) mechanisms operating from below; (2) mechanisms operating from the middle; (3) mechanisms operating from above; and (4) mechanisms operating from without. We have found evidence partially confirming and partially disconfirming the existence of different mechanisms operating at all of these levels, which we can summarize as follows (see figure 11).

### FIGURE 11. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR CATALONIA

- A. *Nation Formation from Below:*
  - 1. Disconfirmed when relative deprivation is calculated in material terms alone.
  - 2. But confirmed when relative deprivation is calculated in political and symbolic terms as well.
- B. *Nation Formation from the Middle:*
  - 1. The “bureaucracy monopoly” mechanism is confirmed outright.
  - 2. The “education indoctrination” mechanism is confirmed as well, though its existence cannot be explained by a functionalist necessity to create homogenous and mobile labor markets.
- C. *Nation Formation from Above:*
  - 1. The evidence is mixed for economic elites, better to conceive of them as co-opted rather than as a driving force.
  - 2. Confirmed outright for political elites.
- D. *Nation Formation from Without:*
  - 1. Confirmed in that integration into the EU has diminished “centripetal carrot” of access to Spanish markets.
  - 2. Also confirmed in that the modernization of the military and its integration into NATO structures has diminished the “centripetal stick” of threat of an involutionist coup.

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