

Legacies of Francoism

The Influence of Historical Memory Frameworks on Spain's Political Divide

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List of Sources and Abbreviations

Abbreviations

AP	Alianza Popular
ARMH	Association for the Recuperation of Historical Memory
C's	Ciudadanos
PCE	Partido Comunista de España
PP	Partido Popular
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español
UCD	Unión de Centro Democrático

Primary Sources

<i>Eldiario.es</i>	Analyzed in chapter 4.
<i>El Mundo</i>	Analyzed in chapter 5.
<i>El País</i>	Analyzed in chapter 3.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

On October 24, 2019, the remains of dictator Francisco Franco were moved from a central place in the Valley of the Fallen (*Valle de los Caídos*) in Madrid to a modest grave.¹ For almost 44 years, Franco's remains had resided in the grand mausoleum built during his regime. Following his victory in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the military dictator ruled Spain until his death in 1975, after which the country transitioned to a democratic political system. According to Spanish newspaper *El País* in 2011, "there is no more powerful and enduring symbol of the man and his legacy than the Valley of the Fallen."² The building holds the remains of Franco and his military partner, José Primo de Rivera, in a public tomb, as well as the remains of thousands of people who fell during the civil war, buried in unmarked graves and consequently exhumed and placed in the mausoleum "to enhance the Valley's size and grandeur."³ The site was proclaimed to be a symbol of reconciliation by the official narrative in the country – the narrative promoted by the national government – following the civil war, but the placement of Franco's remains in an elevated, centralized position left a large part of the public to view the mausoleum as a symbol of tribute to the former dictator. Where for some, the construction equals the embodiment of "immense loss and unspeakable suffering," for others "it is a fitting tribute to Spain's most consequential leader, and a monument to a persistent strain of Spanish nationalism."⁴

The debate on how to frame and face its Francoist past has emerged occasionally since the early 2000s. The fierce debates between political parties surrounding the exhumation thereby show the continuation of this divide. Where the event was initiated and executed by Spain's socialist government, conservative, rightist parties have mostly condemned the entire process. This case thereby gives an insight into the politically charged divides on how to carry out practices of historical memory with regards to the country's Francoist past and how these memory frameworks are inseparable from these divisions.

At the time of the exhumation, political tensions were already running high in Spain. Two years prior, in 2017, several Catalanian government officials had organized an independence referendum after clashing with the central government. Their actions resulted in

¹ BBC, "Franco exhumation: Spanish dictator's remains removed."

² Junquera, "A Valley For All of the Fallen?"

³ Palmer, "The Battle Over the Memory of the Spanish Civil War."

⁴ Ibid.

the temporary dissolution of Catalonia's regional government as well as the conviction and imprisonment of several of its leaders.⁵ This constitutional crisis deepened the division in Spain's society and led to social and political unrest, shown by protests and violent clashes between police and public.⁶ These developments have resulted in a rising popularity of the far Right and have brought the legitimacy of the relationship between Spain and the European Union into question, as the process raised concerns "about the very nature of democracy in Europe."⁷ Furthermore, the exhumation took place nearly two weeks before Spain's national election on November 10, 2019. Electoral campaigning thereby officially started on November 1, yet political parties were seen as being immersed in pre-campaigns, especially with regards to Franco's exhumation. This specific timing has led to strong allegations of using historical memory for electoral gain and has forced political parties to voice their views on the matter.

These developments have led this research to question how historical memory frameworks regarding Francoism and the Spanish transition to democracy continue to play a dividing role in Spain, and whether its position towards the European Union was mobilized in the domestic memory debate regarding Franco's exhumation. It will thereby be centered around the question:

How were Spanish memory frameworks expressed in public debates around Franco's exhumation, and how did they reflect Spain's growing political divide?

It will thereby investigate why the reburial remains significant 44 years after the dictator's death, and what its significance was in public debate regarding the historical memory of Francoism. Thusly, this research will place the focus of analysis on representations of historical memory developments in public discourse. It will examine how historical memory has influenced Spanish politics as represented in public discourse, in this case the media, because the narratives most prominently featured in the media and speeches often reflect the official framework, the framework promoted by the state.⁸ The official memory, in turn, "constitutes the public manifestation of the memory of a particular historical episode."⁹ The nature and presence of historical memory in society is thereby depended on frameworks

⁵ Balcells, "A Way Out of Spain's Catalan Crisis."

⁶ BBC, "Catalan referendum: Clashes as voters defy Madrid."

⁷ Orr, "The Catalan Crisis, Scotland, and the Role of the EU."

⁸ Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 2.

⁹ Ibid., 30.

promoted by the state. This research will take on the case of Franco's exhumation to analyze which frameworks were most dominantly represented in the media and how these adhere to specific frameworks promoted by social and political elites in power.

The relevance of this research is expressed through the contingent risks that accompany an increasing fracture of Spain's political consensus in the face of deepening divisions across the political arena. The debate regarding the historical memory of Francoism in the case of the dictator's exhumation rose in a political moment of great significance, in which the legitimacy of the country's democratic nature was questioned and national elections were in sight. This research will therefore aim to contribute to the debate on discursive constructions of reconciliation around the period of Franco's exhumation, with regards to the historical memory of Francoism.

1.1 Methodology

In methodological terms, this research will take on a qualitative approach. As opposed to quantitative research, in which a theory of variables is tested through statistical methods, the qualitative approach can be defined as "an emergent, inductive, interpretive and naturalistic approach to the study of people, cases, phenomena, social situations and processes in their natural settings in order to reveal in descriptive terms the meanings that people attach to their experiences of the world."¹⁰ Characteristics of this approach are multifaceted, and the method is based on the epistemological understanding that social phenomena are too intertwined and complicated to be narrowed into secluded variables.¹¹ Qualitative research typically centers around questions of 'what?' and can include formulations of 'how?' as well.¹² Investigations of this kind thereby focus on conceptualizing the research matter as complete and in multiple parts, the relation between these parts and the organization of the matter as a whole. "Knowing *what* something is" may involve an explanation of the matter's context as well, next to its results and significance of its place in the world.¹³

Within the qualitative methodology, this research will use discourse analysis to approach the research matter. This type of analysis has been linked to philosopher and historian Michel Foucault, who explained discourse on two levels: "On one level, discourse is a regular set of linguistic facts, while on another level it is an ordered set of polemical and

¹⁰ Yilmaz, "Comparison of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Traditions," 312.

¹¹ Ibid., 311.

¹² Wertz et. al, *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis*, 2.

¹³ Ibid.

strategic facts. This analysis of discourse as a strategic and polemical game is, in my judgment, a second line of research to pursue.”¹⁴ He thereby explains that “discourses comprise all statements within a society that can be made insofar as they are recognized as meaningful.”¹⁵ This implies a norm by which discourses are qualified as significant, which, in turn, is formed through discourse as well. Here it becomes clear that discourses create guidelines and rules, not only for the linguistic level but for its content as well. It thereby constructs classifications in which knowledge is deemed right or wrong and statements appropriate or not. The approach of discourse analysis further draws a close connection between discourses and practices, arguing that the rules which apply to words apply to actions as well.¹⁶ After all, actions can – typically – be seen as the results of knowledge acquired through discourse.

Discourse analysis follows the lines of a theoretical framework more than of “a method in the strict sense,” and involves considerations which center around connections between knowledge, language and power.¹⁷ The exact practice of discourse analysis, however, has been deemed “difficult to define,” not in the least because of the confusion that surrounds the concept of ‘discourse.’¹⁸ While some scholars provide multiple interpretations of the concept, others keep from defining it at all, even though “it has perhaps the widest range of possible significations of any term in literary and cultural theory.”¹⁹ The definition presented in this research explains discourses as the “totality of meaningful events that are examined with regard to institutionally stabilized common structural patterns, practices, rules, and resources of meaning generation.”²⁰ This definition builds on the assumption that growth in social knowledge is not always a constant, logical development, but is characterized by particular interests of powerful groups. In other words, dominant forms of knowledge play a legitimizing role toward existing relations of power while simultaneously, the figures in power are capable of deeming knowledge true or not.²¹

The approach of discourse analysis is therefore significantly suitable for historical research, as it contributes to shedding light on the historical evolution of institutions and social systems, as well as investigating the development of social and power relations.²²

¹⁴ Brandmayr, “Discourse Analysis.”; Cheek, “At the Margins?,” 1142.

¹⁵ Brandmayr, “Discourse Analysis.”

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Cheek, “At the Margins?,” 1140-1141.

¹⁹ Mills, *Discourse*, 1.

²⁰ Brandmayr, “Discourse Analysis.”

²¹ Ibid.; Cheek, “At the Margins?,” 1143.

²² Brandmayr, “Discourse Analysis.”

Social interpretations of historical events structure people's general perception of their environment and guide them in their actions, which leads to the question of how such patterns of interpretation have developed. Because discourse theory considers such patterns to be constructed rather than to have appeared naturally, historical investigation focuses on the developments that made such processes possible. As these developments are part of everyday life, they are deemed to be understood best by analyzing texts.²³ Discourse analysis thereby goes beyond a linguistic analysis of content and concerns itself with "the way in which texts themselves have constructed in terms of their social and historical 'situatedness.'"²⁴

As this type of analysis is most suitable for historical research, it will be for this research as well. To analyze memory frameworks presented in public discourse, this research will have to investigate the patterns in which such frameworks are discussed and interpreted, as well as where these patterns originated from. Furthermore, the suitability of this research method applies to the subject matter as well in the sense that both discourse theory and this research are centered around questions of power relations and their connections to social discourse.

In order to analyze the main topic, this research will take on multiple sub-questions to describe and divide the subject matter. These sub-questions will explain (i) what the main collective memory frameworks in Spain are regarding its Francoist past, including the Spanish Civil War, Franco's regime and the following democratic transition as presented in public discourse; (ii) how these frameworks are mobilized in representations of the exhumation and (iii) whether Spain's position towards the European Union was mobilized in the public debate over Franco's exhumation. The first sub-question will be analyzed through a historical overview of Spain's official memory practices. As the Spanish Civil War gave way to Franco's regime, it continues to be a highly significant event in the country's contemporary historical memory. Its end therefore marks the starting point of this analysis, in order to investigate which Francoist frameworks remain represented in public debate and which have disappeared. As a means of answering the second and third sub-question, this research will continue with an analysis of how Spanish public opinion, in its many ideological expressions, address historical memory in regards to Franco's exhumation, since the most dominantly expressed frameworks in public debate often allow us to approximate the current state of official memory frameworks.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Cheek, "At the Margins?," 1144.

1.2 Sources

Representations of historical memory frameworks in public discourse will be examined by a focus on Spanish newspapers as primary source. As mentioned earlier, the frameworks most prominently portrayed often indicate the officially promoted narrative, which offers significant insights not only into prevailing memory frameworks but also into the political inclination of these newspapers' preferred party. In this way, newspapers become active agents in society with the ability to reshape or reinforce specific historical memory frameworks in the public's eye which, in turn, has an impact on the prevalence of specific narratives as the official memory discourse.

The selection of primary sources has fallen on newspapers *El País*, *eldiario.es* and *El Mundo*. The first and latter are chosen because they represent the most popular newspapers in Spain, carrying the highest number of readership.²⁵ The level of influence these newspapers retain among newsreaders makes them likely to be considered as a reliable and authoritative source in public debate, which, in turn, signifies them as prominent in the creation or reproduction of memory frameworks in the media. Furthermore, the online newspaper *eldiario.es* will be analyzed because it holds a different finance model than the other newspapers, in which it claims to be less dependent on revenues from business advertisements and promotes a sense of community among its readers.²⁶ Their proclamation of financial independence and focus on the community implies a heightened ability and will to (re)produce historical memory frameworks, as the newspaper does not have to adhere to narratives imposed from an elite (whether social, political or economic) and as its focus is placed on communal values such as democratization and social justice.²⁷

To get a clear insight on how Franco's exhumation is portrayed across these newspapers while keeping in mind the scope of this research, the analysis confines itself to the two weeks prior to the event and the two weeks following. In other words, the timeframe of analysis will be from October 10 until November 7, 2019. Furthermore, the criteria by which analyzed newspaper articles are chosen center around whether they discuss historical memory frameworks of Francoist times, the political or social developments surrounding the exhumation or a connection between these topics. Initially, the expectation of this research held that memory frameworks would be communicated clearly in the analyzed texts.

²⁵ Galluzzi, *Libraries and Public Perception*, 28.

²⁶ Breiner, "Spain's El Diario Shows That Good Journalism Can Be Good Business."

²⁷ Sánchez and Escolar, "Eldiario.es's business model."

Throughout this research, however, it has become clear that such representations are often constructed and transferred more subtly.

1.3 Theoretical Concepts

In order to analyze the historical memory frameworks in Spain and their influence on a political divide, this research will make use of several theoretical concepts that are in need of some clarification. These concepts mainly include historical memory and its political aspect, Francoism and political reconciliation.

1.3.1 Historical memory and its political aspect

Since the 1930s, the conviction has emerged that memory not only takes place on an individual level but through social discourse as well. The way in which groups of people remember past events is thereby understood as the result of social experiences, interactions and customs.²⁸ Through memory, individuals construct their experiences and in that process, their identities as well. In much of the same manner, communities need memory to provide them with a sense of place in society.²⁹ These memories thus play a highly significant role not only in how groups view themselves and the societal structures surrounding them, but also in how they act towards one another. Such significance makes clear that the adoption of specific narratives can play a most valuable role in the political and social direction a society aspires to take, as an understanding of the past lets groups make sense of their present existence as well as their plans and desires for the future.³⁰

This research will place its focus on narratives of historical memory, which are not used to remember the past but rather to refer to it, to construct it.³¹ Historical memory thereby differs from historiography, as an historical overview of the past will be much more complex than any historical memory narrative, since the latter's "aspiration to have collective currency" demands a simplified interpretation of the past.³² This shows that such narratives are actively constructed to transfer certain views of history. Shared meanings and aspirations in a society are thus translated through representations of a shared history, by which present and future actions are justified through a specific past.³³ Such representations can play either a uniting or

²⁸ Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 125.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Boyd, "The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain," 134.

³¹ Loureiro, "Pathetic Arguments," 226.

³² Ibid.

³³ Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 57.

dividing role in society, as differing narratives are adopted by oppositional groups or as such adoptions lead to deeper divisions. Historical memory frameworks thereby act as “ideals guiding action.”³⁴

Regarding the significant role memory frameworks may play in the aspirations of a society, it becomes clear that the level in which they are adopted is highly valuable to political actors and elites. Furthermore, as understandings of the past are formed by social interactions, the most dominant ideas are continuously strengthened within a community. These ideas mainly emerge from political and social elites, who use specific narratives “to justify themselves and to advance their political, economic and social goals.”³⁵ Narratives of historical memory are thereby not only used to achieve political goals, but to achieve political legitimization as well. Moreover, “a usable past” is seen as necessary for any political state to remain legitimate and able to endure.³⁶ The stability of a political regime thereby rests on the coexistence between individual or collective memories and those presented by the government and that in order to maintain this stability, differences between personal experiences and the official narrative “must not differ to the extent that they are unable to coexist.”³⁷ To maintain legitimacy in the aftermath of the European memory boom that mainly took place in the 1990s, contemporary politics – in Europe – has tended to place the focus of historical memory on painful periods of the past. Memory narratives have thereby been constructed around ideas of “learning the lessons of history,” a practice that has been termed as “politics of regret.”³⁸ Political legitimization thereby depends on how contemporary societies face the painful legacies of their past.

1.3.2 Francoism

‘Repressive regimes’ are generally defined as “all forms of non-democratic regimes that have produced abuses of human rights.”³⁹ The rule of Franco clearly falls under this classification, yet its specific character has been much debated and its features have been ascribed to totalitarian, authoritarian and fascist practices. One of the most widely followed views of Franco’s Spain is that its emergence was intertwined with features of totalitarianism – such as

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Lebow, “The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe,” 4.

³⁶ Herzberger, *Narrating the Past*, 16.

³⁷ Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 2.

³⁸ Olick, *Politics of Regret*, 122.

³⁹ Closa Montero, “Study on how the memory of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe is dealt with in the Member States”, 11.

the presence of an ideology (in this case, Catholic ideology), a distinct mass party and concentrated authority in an individual – which gradually evolved into authoritarian characteristics, such as limited political pluralism, the presence of a specific mentality rather than ideology, and a form of state management subjected to predictable restraints.⁴⁰ Additionally, Franco's regime, and especially its emergence, has been described through practices of fascism, a notion that closely relates to totalitarianism but places a larger emphasis on rightist political practices and extreme nationalism.⁴¹

Such interpretations, however, ascribe the nature of Franco's regime to pre-existing classifications, by which its complexity is vastly understated. Instead, this research explains Francoism as a unique form of rule in which aspects of all of the mentioned '-isms' were featured. After all, Franco's government did prescribe an ideology, in which the Catholic church was fiercely classified as righteous, but also allowed (extremely) limited pluralism and promoted acts of nationalism.⁴² As a result, Francoism is here defined as "a fascistized dictatorship," meaning that it has undergone a process in which specific sectors belonging to the political and social Right adopted fascist policies to face calls for democracy.⁴³ The regime can thereby not be fully placed in the category of a fascist state, but did not see the complete absence of fascist influence either. The Francoist state thus maintained practices similar to fascist states, such as antidemocratic trends and a high level of social control, yet these practices were subjected to the will of the dictatorship and therefore did not control the general dynamic of Franco's regime.⁴⁴

1.3.3 Political reconciliation

As this research will analyze the influence of memory on a political divide in Spain, it will also place a focus on the level of reconciliation (or lack thereof) in the country. More specifically, it will investigate the political understanding of reconciliation. As opposed to reconciliation in moral terms, which aims to restore the relationship between the wrongdoer and the affected community, political reconciliation causes the reconciliatory level of a community to depend on the contingent results of politics.⁴⁵ The political form of

⁴⁰ Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, 67; Saz Campos, "Fascism, fascistization and developmentalism in Franco's dictatorship," 343-344; Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 29.

⁴¹ Paxton, "The Five Stages of Francoism," 4; Davies and Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far Right*, Historiography.

⁴² Saz Campos, "Fascism, fascistization and developmentalism in Franco's dictatorship," 342-345.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 345.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Schaap, *Political Reconciliation*, 8.

reconciliation starts by invoking a ‘we,’ rather than ending with it.⁴⁶ This form of reconciliation results in the risk that such practices end in the endurance of divisive dynamics in which individuals in a society view one another either as friend or as enemy. Within such occurrences, the possibilities of reconciliation are prevented altogether.⁴⁷

The implementation of political reconciliation is significant for societies which usually carry four different features, namely the presence of an authoritarian (or similarly undemocratic) regime that has denied its citizens rights, the division of society in distinct groups in which supporters of the regime hold dominion over an oppositional group, the appearance of human rights violations in a country’s recent political past and a level of widespread hostility between members of opposing groups.⁴⁸ Political reconciliation thereby depends on “transforming a relation of enmity into one of civic friendship.”⁴⁹ In the context of democratic transitions, reconciliation is often associated with addressing legacies of state violence, mainly through measures of transitional justice, such as the application of retributive justice or the establishment of commissions investigating state crimes.⁵⁰ Such legal strategies, however, are not enough to achieve true reconciliation, as members of a community – who do not specifically belong to the groups of victims or perpetrators – need to find ground to coexist before they can affirm the legitimacy of public institutions. This search for common ground is thereby intertwined with politics as it focuses on the possible invocation of a ‘we’ that might include the supporters and victims of the repressive government.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Căbulea May, “Moral compromise, civic friendship, and political reconciliation,” 587-588.

⁴⁹ Schaap, “Political Reconciliation Through a Struggle for Recognition?,” 523.

⁵⁰ Schaap, *Political Reconciliation*, 10.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Chapter 2.

Historical Background

During a wave of violence throughout Europe, such as the Russian Revolution and the rise of Nazism, democratic centers across the region were undermined as developments of polarization permitted political extremes to gain power.⁵² In 1936 Spain, Francisco Franco led a group of military leaders in an effort to overthrow the Second Republic, a democratic regime that had emerged in 1931 after the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera.⁵³ Although the coup d'état failed, the attempt ushered in a civil war that would last until 1939. Franco's followers, the Nationalist forces, were "right wing, centralist and authoritarian," while Republican supporters defended regional independence and individual freedom.⁵⁴ The war has been described as an armed class struggle, a war of religion, a battle between democracy and military dictatorship, between revolution and counterrevolution and between communism and fascism.⁵⁵ The number of fatal victims generated by the war, either directly or indirectly, remains unclear as the majority of Republican fatalities was buried in unmarked mass graves across the country, but has mostly been estimated to be around half a million.⁵⁶

The year 1939 marked the end of the war as well as Franco's victory. His regime almost immediately enacted the Law of Political Responsibilities which had "the sole purpose of cleansing Spain of left-wing influence."⁵⁷ Applied retroactively, the law was meant for anyone who had purposefully supported the Republican opposition, initiating a continuation of the deep division that had marked the war. Over 200,000 people died during the regime as a result of execution, disease or hunger and more than 400,000 people were imprisoned based on political charges. Roughly 500,000 Spaniards fled the country or were exiled.⁵⁸

In what follows, this research will explain the dominant memory frameworks regarding the civil war, and how these evolved throughout Franco's rule and after his death. The focus is placed on the first sub-question of this research and mainly on the exploration of Spain's official memory, "since this constitutes the public manifestation of the memory of a particular historical episode," especially when the government encompasses almost complete

⁵² Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, Introduction.

⁵³ Desfor Edles, *Symbol and Ritual in the New Spain*, 5.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Juliá, *Un siglo de España*, 118.

⁵⁶ Lannon, *The Spanish Civil War: 1936-1939*, Introduction.

⁵⁷ Encarnación, "Justice in Times of Transition," 181.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

control of the media.⁵⁹ It will thereby describe how Francoist discourse regarding the civil war endured after his death, as well as divisions in society, in a general climate of silence surrounding historical memory. It will also explain how historical memory was revived in the late 1990s and how it ruptured a political consensus based on ‘forgetting,’ dividing powerful elites along those who wanted to ‘forget’ and those who wanted to ‘remember.’

2.1 Emergence of the Franco regime

Franco’s rule lasted for thirty-six years after the end of the Spanish Civil War, until his death in 1975. Here, this research will mainly analyze the official memory frameworks regarding the civil war during the Franco regime and how these evolved throughout his rule, showing that while the dictatorship initially related itself to notions of religious and national unity, these gradually transformed into notions of economic welfare and peace.

The civil war in Spain carried “major social implications” and constituted a significant focus of memory, although this focus was never uniform.⁶⁰ Since the war gave way to Franco’s regime, providing “its founding myth par excellence,” it continued to be an essential event during his rule.⁶¹ The war was portrayed as the foundation on which the country was built, defining not only the nation but also its “destiny.”⁶² Franco’s construction of a “New Spain” was based on emphasizing victory, patriotism and unity.⁶³ The political power and legitimization of the regime thus rested on how the war was framed and remembered. Historical memory thereby constituted a conduit by which the regime continued the separation of the civil war throughout its rule, with a clear break between the ‘victors’ and the ‘defeated.’⁶⁴

The official framework during the first two decades of the dictatorship, pushed on all forms of controlled media, explained the war as the logical and necessary result of critical circumstances.⁶⁵ Franco’s victory was framed as an act of salvation in which he had rescued the nation from “the chaos and destruction of the Republican period.”⁶⁶ The “godless” Republicans and other leftists represented the villains while Francoists were portrayed as patriotic, God-loving heroes.⁶⁷ Such discourse was either implemented by official institutions of the regime or developed under their control.

⁵⁹ Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 30.

⁶⁰ Richards, “From War Culture to Civil Society,” 94.

⁶¹ Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 31.

⁶² Richards, “From War Culture to Civil Society,” 94.

⁶³ Cenarro Lagunas, “Memory beyond the Public Sphere,” 167.

⁶⁴ Ryan, “For Whom the Dominant Memory Tolls,” 120.

⁶⁵ Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 32.

⁶⁶ Shevel, “The Politics of Memory in a Divided Society,” 137.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

The government's memory of the civil war was initially related to values of unity on a national and religious level, focusing on Franco's uprising as the only way to save the country from the social chaos and separatism of the Second Republic. The political instability in Spain was explained by Franco, however, not only as a result of the Second Republic, but as caused by "the Spanish character" as well.⁶⁸ The dictator argued that Spaniards had an "anarchic spirit" and lived in a sphere of "mutual hostility," thereby justifying his rule to counter these negative qualities with a "strong authoritarian government."⁶⁹ With the goal of reaching a unified nation, the regime imposed a collective Spanish identity while other national identities, such as Basque or Catalan, were marginalized and suppressed.⁷⁰

A large part of the Spanish population, however, did not act as passive recipient of political and social repression.⁷¹ Repressed memories and identities endured in the form of a wide range of oppositional discourses as ways of cultural resistance.⁷² Many of these counter-memories were portrayed in film, literature and popular song, showing that the popular arena of memories "was far from harmonious."⁷³ Memory thereby became "a site of struggle and resistance" for repressed communities through which they constructed differing cultural identities that defied the official identity promoted by the regime.⁷⁴

Subsequently, the level of contradiction between the official memory and opposing frameworks regarding the war continued to rise. Furthermore, the country experienced a revival of economic welfare during the 1960s, leading to an increasing level of urbanization and the rise of a new middle class.⁷⁵ Despite the repressive efforts to impose the Francoist version of history on the public, the emergence of differing memories perpetuated as they corresponded better to those of a large part of the country, who had experienced the war or learned about it through non-official channels.⁷⁶

This economic advancement "encouraged a culture of distancing oneself from the past."⁷⁷ Increasing welfare in the country thereby gave rise to a consumerist society, which expressed more interest in the promises of future progress than on facing the pain of the past.⁷⁸ Furthermore, developments in social welfare led to the rise of a new middle class and

⁶⁸ Gunther, Montero and Botella, *Democracy in Modern Spain*, 3.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Colmeiro, "A Nation of Ghosts?," 24.

⁷¹ Richards, "From War Culture to Civil Society," 112.

⁷² Colmeiro, "A Nation of Ghosts?," 24.

⁷³ Richards, "From War Culture to Civil Society," 112.

⁷⁴ Colmeiro, "A Nation of Ghosts?," 23.

⁷⁵ Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 150-153.

⁷⁶ Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 31.

⁷⁷ Encarnación, "Reconciliation after Democratization," 445.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

increased urbanization, factors that contributed to the notion that Spain did not hold a static society. The cultural and intellectual elite that had emerged during the late 1950s, was able to gain more ground in civil society and expressed criticism regarding the regime.⁷⁹ Although the economic boom endorsed the unwillingness of a majority of the Spanish public to revisit their war past, the growing gap between the official memory and individual memory became too large and started to threaten the stability of the regime.⁸⁰

To maintain legitimacy, the regime was forced to adjust their official narrative. According to Francoist discourse, the Second Republic may have been legitimate in view of its origins, yet lost this legitimacy due to their incompetent performance. Franco, on the other hand, may have come to power illegitimately, but aspired to become legitimate based on his performance.⁸¹ His achievements thereby included not only the military victory in the civil war, but also his “effective economic and social management.”⁸²

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, generalized discourse evolved into an implied agreement that the war had been “a tragic act of madness for which all Spaniards were to blame.”⁸³ This view related closely to the officially promoted notion that Spanish people were somehow “innately bad,” not fit for democratic freedoms because they would be “ungovernable.”⁸⁴ While the myth of the ‘ungovernable Spanish’ was initially used to justify the emergence of the regime, a change in focus becomes visible as it was later used to reinforce the idea of equal responsibility regarding the war. These notions of shared responsibility and an ungovernable public thereby implied that the violence of the dictatorship, the “purification” and “purge,” were somehow validated.⁸⁵ The promotion of equal responsibility, however, did not equal an appearance of reconciliation. As the legitimacy of the regime continued to be based on justifying the war and marginalizing the opposition, “real reconciliation based on forgiveness and an acknowledgement of guilt” would have been incompatible with its endurance.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Chuliá, “Cultural Diversity and the Development of a Pre-democratic Civil Society in Spain,” 168.

⁸⁰ Richards, “From War Culture to Civil Society,” 111.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Richards, “From War Culture to Civil Society,” 111.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

⁸⁶ Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 33.

2.2 The Spanish Transition

Francisco Franco died on November 20, 1975. After his death, Spain slowly began a process of liberalization within the regime, commenced by Francoist institutions.⁸⁷ The main understanding of the Spanish transition explains the timeline of full democratization to be from 1975 to 1982, when the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, PSOE) won the national election. Although the gradual transformation in Spanish society was surrounded by many uncertainties, a majority of public figures in the country opted for more or less the same goal: "inorganic, plural democracy, featuring political parties and parliamentary representation."⁸⁸ The Spanish transition to democracy has been the subject of a broad range of historical analysis, and differing interpretations regarding this period circle the academic field. In what follows, this research will describe the most widely followed views regarding the Spanish Transition. These interpretations acknowledge a lack of a progress in the retrieval of historical memory in the country, and explain these developments as an unofficial agreement between the "Francoists reformists and the democratic opposition."⁸⁹ Where a large part of the historical research describes this accord as a consensus-based pact that initiated an exemplary process of peaceful democratization, other scholars have emphasized the social unrest accompanying the transformation.

One of the main interpretations of the period argues that the fear for a repetition of the civil war caused the country to adopt a cautious approach in its transition. In 1974, Spain had seen the beginning of an economic crisis that worsened the state of the country's economy.⁹⁰ The first democratic government, which was established on June 15, 1977, thereby faced the burden of the financial crisis from the start. Subsequently, many feared that the costly measures to counter the crisis would negatively influence the legitimacy of the democratic regime.⁹¹ The crisis was accompanied by the restoration of party politics, high social demands and a general climate of uncertainty, all of which led a large part of the Spanish public to recall "the failures of the past" and fear a recurrence of the events that took place in their recent history.⁹² Another factor that incited fear was the possible response of the military, how it would react to social unrest, regional demands for a higher level of autonomy or calls for

⁸⁷ Ibid., 149.

⁸⁸ Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 150.

⁸⁹ Fernández Paredes, "Transitional Justice in Democratization Processes," 132.

⁹⁰ Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 150.

⁹¹ Ibid., 151.

⁹² Ibid.

retributive justice. The fear of military intervention thereby led a large part of the public to worry for an uprising such as the one in the 1930s.⁹³

These factors, historical memory of a painful past and the fear of repeated radicalization, shaped the demands of “all the important” social and political groups at the time and led them to a path of cautious political transformation.⁹⁴ The ‘pact of forgetting,’ or ‘pact of silence,’ was born, a term first coined by Paloma Aguilar in the 1990s and a concept that has been widely followed in both the academic and popular world.⁹⁵ The notion describes the “informal agreement” between “the incumbent reformists and the moderates of the opposition” to “forget” the painful past and to give up prosecutions and investigations regarding crimes that were related to the dictatorship and civil war, thereby “cementing its legacy of silence.”⁹⁶ The pact was officially consolidated in 1977, when the parliament passed the Amnesty Law, guaranteeing the amnesty for all executors of institutional violence during the years of Franco’s rule.

As Aguilar explains in her book (1996), “negotiation, pact-making, giving ground, tolerance” were the crucial means by which the political elite constructed its new policies for the country.⁹⁷ In this view, notions of amicability and respect are ascribed to the general climate in Spain at the time.⁹⁸ Moreover, the “peaceful end to dictatorship in Spain” is often called upon as a success story with regards to institutional democratization, to a level in which it is argued that the country shows that reconciling with the national past is no longer deemed necessary for “a successful democratization process.”⁹⁹ The described factors that contributed to Spain’s “transformation” include the socioeconomic development that stemmed from the economic welfare the country had experienced since the 1960s, bringing about a higher living standard “for all social groups,” as well as how groups in Spain during the transition interacted with one another, a dynamic that has been described as following the lines of a “procedural consensus.”¹⁰⁰ The democratic regime that emerged in the late 1970s in the country is thereby viewed as a modernized form of politics, a transformation that was “welcomed by all.”¹⁰¹

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Núñez, “New Interpretations of the Spanish Civil War,” 518.

⁹⁶ Palmer, “The Battle Over the Memory of the Spanish Civil War.”; Shevel, “The Politics of Memory in a Divided Society,” 139; Sánchez-Cuenca and Aguilar, “Terrorist Violence and Popular Mobilization,” 433.

⁹⁷ Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 151.

⁹⁸ Gunther, Montero and Botella, *Democracy in Modern Spain*, 7.

⁹⁹ Encarnación, “Justice in Times of Transition,” 182; Shevel, “The Politics of Memory in a Divided Society,” 139.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 10.

¹⁰¹ Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 151.

These views argue for the establishment of consensus-based politics after Franco's death in which Spain succeeded in avoiding its "historical curse" and leaving behind a climate of intolerance and repression.¹⁰² Other explanations of the pact of silence, however, strongly question the level of consensus in the country at the time. For one, the enormous financial and social gap that separated the victors of the civil war from the defeated lived on in the country. Republican victims mostly did not receive compensation for their suffering, and many leftist civil servants were never rehabilitated in their professions. Those who were, often did not enjoy the same treatment or salary.¹⁰³ The Francoist narrative regarding the civil war remained largely undisturbed by official institutions, leaving little room in public discourse for memories of the Republican side.¹⁰⁴ The sociocultural basis of the transition rested on the notion of "the civil war as a fratricidal tragedy for which responsibility was equally shared."¹⁰⁵ Promoted slogans such as "never again" and "we were all guilty" endorsed this social memory of tragedy and shared blame, frameworks that originated from discourse regarding the Holocaust.¹⁰⁶ The military remained loyal to the regime, leaving the opposition with not enough power to control the transition or overthrow the "Francoist Parliament."¹⁰⁷

In this view, the pact of silence is seen as an agreement "that swept under the rug the horrors of the civil war and the dictatorship, refusing to demand responsibilities and allowing an unquestioned democratization of former Francoists."¹⁰⁸ This is endorsed by the notion that 'the reformists' retained enough power to prevent the total disappearance of the Francoist regime, thereby forcing their opposition to accept a gradual process in which the institutions of the old regime transformed into democratic ones.¹⁰⁹ The party of Adolfo Suárez – former head of the National Movement, the legal political organization within the Franco regime – the Union of the Democratic Centre (*Unión de Centro Democrático*, UCD), won the national elections in 1977 and implemented a new Constitution a year later, which confirmed the establishment of Spain as a democratic and social state.¹¹⁰ At that time, the main parties in the country's political arena, as resulted from the 1977 elections, were the UCD, the PSOE, which had existed since 1879 and had been barred from political participation during the

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 34.

¹⁰⁴ Shevel, "The Politics of Memory in a Divided Society," 139.

¹⁰⁵ Boyd, "The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain," 135.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.; Burack, "'Never Again'".

¹⁰⁷ Sánchez-Cuenca and Aguilar, "Terrorist Violence and Popular Mobilization," 434; Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, 88.

¹⁰⁸ Loureiro, "Pathetic Arguments," 225.

¹⁰⁹ Sánchez-Cuenca and Aguilar, "Terrorist Violence and Popular Mobilization," 433-434.

¹¹⁰ Spanish Const. 1978 art. I, § 1; Ibid.; Encarnación, "Justice in Times of Transition," 183.

dictatorship, the Communist Party of Spain (*Partido Comunista de España*, PCE), which placed itself on the Left of the PSOE, and the People's Alliance (*Alianza Popular*, AP), which has been described as "neo-Francoist."¹¹¹

The electoral process was accompanied by a high level of political violence and public protests, which especially came from the separatist organization 'Basque Homeland and Freedom' (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*, ETA).¹¹² As acts of opposition to the democratic regime, which the organization regarded as "a mere façade for authoritarianism," ETA placed hundreds of bomb explosions and was responsible for 371 deaths and 50 kidnappings between 1973 and 1982.¹¹³ The terrorism taking place in this period, however, was conducted by other organizations as well and can be divided in different types.¹¹⁴ ETA was one of the organizations carrying out separatist or nationalist violence, which aspired to separate specific regions from the country. Secondly, there was revolutionary or left-wing violence, which aimed to spark a popular revolution against Spanish capitalism. Thirdly, there was an emergence of fascist violence, which reacted in part to the new Spanish democracy and in another part to the presence of separatist violence.¹¹⁵ The most serious undertaking of fascist violence during the transition took place in 1981, when the military attempted to conduct a coup d'état to overthrow the democratic regime.¹¹⁶ The coup failed, but it reminded Spain of the army's ability to "disrupt the new political order."¹¹⁷

The notion that the political elites in Spain made a pact to 'forget' the past, explains that the country did not come to terms with its past during this period. One of the few opponents of this view is historian Santos Juliá, who denies that there has ever been such an agreement at all. According to him, there has not been any forgetfulness regarding the civil war or the following regime in Spain, which is shown by thousands of published works reflecting on this period, including films, literature and studies.¹¹⁸ Juliá argues that hereby, amnesty is confused with amnesia. He proposes that rather than understanding the process as 'forgetting,' it should be understood as 'to throw something into oblivion.'¹¹⁹ Furthermore, critics have argued that the idea of a pact of silence implies the existence of an all-controlling

¹¹¹ Muro and Alonso, "Introduction," 3; Hopkin, "Party Matters," 188; Ramiro-Fernández, "Electoral Competition, Organizational Constraints and Party Change," 1; Encarnación, *Spanish Politics*, 57.

¹¹² Encarnación, "Justice in Times of Transition," 186; Sánchez-Cuenca and Aguilar, "Terrorist Violence and Popular Mobilization," 435.

¹¹³ Encarnación, "Justice in Times of Transition," 186.

¹¹⁴ Sánchez-Cuenca and Aguilar, "Terrorist Violence and Popular Mobilization," 435.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.; Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, 89.

¹¹⁷ Encarnación, "Justice in Times of Transition," 186.

¹¹⁸ Faber, "The Price of Peace," 207.

¹¹⁹ Ferrán, *Working Through Memory*, 24.

political elite who implemented the agreement from above, while the public is limited to a passive role.¹²⁰ Yet the transitional period, as they argue, continuously saw a “give-and-take between power and resistance,” with multiple popular as well as political forces aspiring a balance that would appease the majority of the population.¹²¹ Many have disagreed with these arguments, stating that the decision to ‘forget’ Francoist crimes was not made by its victims and can therefore not mean true social acceptance or reconciliation. Juliá’s argument that the decision to forget constituted a conscious act of remembering are thereby seen as “too facile.”¹²²

All interpretations of the transitional period in Spain make clear that there was a low level of historical memory present in the country. Many scholars have emphasized the peacefulness of Spain’s transition and viewed it as an exemplary case for democratization in other countries. The social unrest, however, as well as a remaining gap in social and economic welfare within society suggest that Spain’s transformation was more complicated and at times seriously threatened. Whether measures of amnesty were implemented because of a political agreement or because of a remaining military threat – or perhaps both – they resulted in the absence of national reconciliation and historical memory, as well as a continuation of a Francoist divide in society, i.e. between the ‘winners’ and ‘defeated’ of the civil war.

2.3 The recovery of historical memory

The silence that encircled the Spanish transition lasted well into the 1990s. During this decade, Europe became the site of a dramatic increase in historical memory in a response to the ending of the Cold War.¹²³ After the Berlin Wall fell, historians became increasingly employed as consultants in various forms of government commissions, such as those tasked with renaming streets or transforming commemoration practices. Their influence, however, was short-lived as the establishment of collective memories and practices became intertwined with memory politics and other forces in society.¹²⁴ In what follows, this research will describe how in Spain the pact of silence started to rupture in the 1990s, giving way to a recovery of historical memory in the country. It will thereby show that the revival of memory adhered to a European trend and took place in different sectors of Spain, resulting from efforts by not only historians but actors in civil society and politics as well. The memory boom

¹²⁰ Loureiro, “Pathetic Arguments,” 225.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Faber, “The Price of Peace,” 209.

¹²³ Pakier and Strâth, “A European Memory?,” 9.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

across these sectors influenced and reinforced one another as developments in legislation led to a revival of memory in civil society, which in turn furthered political efforts to oppose the forgetfulness of the transition.

In 1986, Spain became a member of the European Community (the frontrunner of the European Union).¹²⁵ The country's membership caused the government in charge, the PSOE, to attempt to present Spain as "a modern, normal European nation" during their time in office.¹²⁶ This adhered to European memory practices during the Cold War, in which the political climate aimed to 'forget' the Holocaust in an attempt to leave the past behind and focus on the future.¹²⁷ Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, however, the international order changed dramatically. The end of the Cold War caused Europe to redefine itself, in which process the region placed the memory of its historical past in a central place as to "construct a new identity and thereby a new basis for how to see the world."¹²⁸ Since the early 2000s, policy of the European Union has, among other points of interest, focused on promoting an agenda of "active European remembrance" regarding the repressive regimes European countries have faced during the twentieth century, which mainly resulted from the increase in EU member countries in 2004.¹²⁹ This growth in EU member states, in which Eastern European countries such as Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Estonia became part of the Union, led to the enlargement of a shared European memory in which the experiences of Soviet Communism were now included as well. This led the EU to initiate policies of constructing "a community of memory that includes both the memory of the Holocaust and of Soviet Communism."¹³⁰ The inclusion of historical memory regarding the Communist past has led to narratives in which these crimes are either equated with the Holocaust or are competing with it, thereby aspiring the recognition of the EU that "the Communist genocide" was at least as traumatic as the Nazi experience.¹³¹ Through such aspirations, the European political arena has witnessed long-lasting competitions over historical memory frameworks which has deepened the division between the Left and Right in the Union, and has made the development of memory policy dependent on those actors in power at the time.¹³²

¹²⁵ Núñez, "New Interpretations of the Spanish Civil War," 518.

¹²⁶ Faber, "The Price of Peace," 211.

¹²⁷ Waehrens, "Shared Memories?," 6.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Littoz-Monnet, "The EU Politics of Remembrance," 1182.

¹³⁰ Waehrens, "Shared Memories?," 4.

¹³¹ Radonić, "Introduction: The Holocaust/Genocide Template in Eastern Europe," 485.

¹³² Ibid., 486; Waehrens, "Shared Memories?," 7.

The fact that the regime survived until 1975 meant that many of the first historical studies into the Spanish Civil War were conducted abroad, either by Spanish scholars in exile or by foreign historians.¹³³ The opening of archives during the transition, however, enabled thorough historical research in regards to the civil war. By the 1990s, historians had shown that the infamy in which Francoist discourse had cast the Second Republic had been unjustified, and that the civil war was mostly caused by the military uprising in 1936.¹³⁴ Simultaneously, historical research was conducted into the practices of Franco's regime and showed that the number of victims generated by its repression was much higher than the victims of Republican parties at the start of the war.¹³⁵ These revelations strongly countered the narrative of equal responsibility, a narrative which had endorsed a sense of "collective guilt" for the nation's war past and, together with an "obsession with peace and stability," had justified the absence of retributive justice.¹³⁶

During this period, however, a large part of the public remained unwilling to confront the traumas of the past due to fears on what this might reveal. After all, Franco's achievements in "institutionalizing his repression" were made possible by the support and participation of a large part of the Spanish public.¹³⁷ The acceptance by a majority of the public of the pact of silence was thereby mostly the result of fears that confronting the past would deepen the wounds and unrest in society, not in the least because that would have showed "the complicity of 'ordinary Spaniards' in the repression."¹³⁸

At the turn of the century, however, historical memory became more present in civil society. After discovering the unmarked mass grave of his grandfather, journalist Emilio Silva Barrera established the Association for the Recuperation of Historical Memory (ARMH) in 2000.¹³⁹ Their initiatives were strengthened by developments in forensic anthropology and within a few years, thousands of bodies were found and identified.¹⁴⁰ At this point in time, 45 percent of the population in Spain belonged to the generation that could not remember the war or Franco's regime.¹⁴¹ They learned about the dictatorship through images of common graves and abused bodies, first published in October 2000, which reached an audience of millions and clearly portrayed "the scope and brutality of the repression," as opposed to the historical

¹³³ Gunther, Montero and Botella, *Democracy in Modern Spain*, 3.

¹³⁴ Boyd, "The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain," 136.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹³⁶ Shevel, "The Politics of Memory in a Divided Society," 140.

¹³⁷ Encarnación, "Reconciliation after Democratization," 443.

¹³⁸ Graham, *The Spanish Civil War*, 140.

¹³⁹ Richards, *After the Civil War*, 330; Boyd, "The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain," 143.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Boyd, "The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain," 142.

accounts of the regime's crimes, which were less accessible to the majority of the Spanish public due to their archival writing style.¹⁴² The organizations dedicated to recover this historical memory initiated a "culture of memory," through notions and images of the past, broadly shared by mass media such as television and the internet, all with the goal of "rescuing those who had been forgotten," something that has been framed as "the prerequisite of reconciliation."¹⁴³

After almost three decades of stable democracy, the fear that the country would fall back into a period of repression and violence had lessened significantly. The confrontation of the nation's past did not seem as threatening as it did during the transition. The event spurring the political arena in Spain to discuss the revival of historical memory took place in 1998, when Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón issued the arrest of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet in London for the deaths of Spanish civilians during his regime between 1973 and 1990.¹⁴⁴ The arrest compromised the pact of silence in two significant ways. Firstly, it led to worldwide criticism in which the country's moral hypocrisy was emphasized and reminded Spain of its own "unresolved issues."¹⁴⁵ Pinochet's arrest sparked a spirited debate about the nation's willingness to prosecute a foreign ruler while simultaneously being resistant to open investigations into the legacies of its own repressive past. Secondly, the affair resulted in developments within the political environment which have been described as encouraging "the rise of collective action."¹⁴⁶ The long-lasting effort to convict Pinochet fractured the political consensus which attempted to keep Spain's history from being a source of division. Where the political Left fiercely endorsed the arrest of the Chilean dictator, the Right did not want to get involved. Prime Minister José María Aznar of the Popular Party (*Partido Popular*, PP) – a party built on the foundation of the AP and that governed the country from 1996 until 2004 – declared neutrality in the case of Pinochet, which led the Left to accuse him of protecting the dictator, "just as Franco would have done."¹⁴⁷

Initial applications for financial support from the government to identify victims of Franco's army in mass graves were denied by Aznar, whose government stated that they saw "no point in reopening old wounds."¹⁴⁸ Once the efforts of recovering historical memory in

¹⁴² Ibid., 143; Encarnación, "Reconciliation after Democratization," 450.

¹⁴³ Richards, *After the Civil War*, 333.

¹⁴⁴ Encarnación, "Reconciliation after Democratization," 447-448; BBC, "World: Europe, Pinochet arrested in London."

¹⁴⁵ Encarnación, "Reconciliation after Democratization," 448; Faber, "The Price of Peace," 211.

¹⁴⁶ Encarnación, "Reconciliation after Democratization," 449.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.; Aduriz, Iñigo. "El PP y Franco."

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

civil society started to gain popular support, however, the ARMH – who was leading the way in this respect – also found political sponsors. Already during the administration of Aznar, leftist parties committed to condemning the Franco regime and preventing forgetfulness, shown by the initiative of the PSOE in 2002 to sponsor a parliamentary declaration which described Franco’s revolution in 1936 as “an antidemocratic act.”¹⁴⁹ At the time, the government of the PP did not meet this declaration with action, but the statement marked a beginning of a change in focus within the official narrative of the Spanish Civil War and Francoism.

It was in 2004 that the PSOE, headed by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, for the first time included the revival of historical memory in its electoral program, to address “the injustices of the past committed against fellow socialists.”¹⁵⁰ The party won the general elections and appointed an ‘Interministerial Commission for the Study of the Situation of the Victims of the civil war and Francoism,’ who was tasked to recommend measures of compensation for “the victims of political repression.”¹⁵¹ The appointment triggered an enormous debate over which groups were victims and what kind of compensation they should get. The Zapatero government had thereby opened “a Pandora’s box of competing memories” deepening the ideological division in the country.¹⁵²

The year 2006 marked the seventieth anniversary of the start of the civil war, and was proclaimed as the “Year of Historical Memory” by the Congress of Deputies, in anticipation of authorizing new legislation that would commemorate victims of the civil war and the following regime.¹⁵³ A year later, the government enacted the “Law of Historical Memory,” which laid out how Spaniards who were sanctioned for their political, cultural or sexual preferences could receive a ‘Declaration of Reparations and Personal Recognition,’ and how the pensions of surviving Republican soldiers and prisoners would be enhanced. It also designated the removal of repressive symbols – unless they carried cultural or historical significance, something that has been called upon in the case of the Valley – and outlawed political acts at the Valley of the Fallen.¹⁵⁴ Most explicitly, the bill guarantees the absence of an imposed common historical memory and ensures that all citizens may remember the past as they like, “while asserting a governmental role in the search for historical knowledge and

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 451.

¹⁵⁰ Encarnación, *Spanish Politics*, 133.

¹⁵¹ Boyd, “The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain,” 144.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.; Encarnación, “Reconciliation after Democratization,” 452.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.; Ibid., 453.

the promotion of ‘democratic memory’.”¹⁵⁵ Although the law was strongly opposed by both the political Right – who argued against the necessity of the law, describing it as hypocritical and irrelevant –, and the Left – who emphasized the insufficiency of the law to end “the system of impunity installed with the transition” –, the intensification of debates regarding the memory of the civil war lessened strikingly after it was passed.¹⁵⁶ Although the law has been described as enabling public debates about memory, leading up to the general elections in 2008, the issue of historical memory was barely mentioned.¹⁵⁷

In May 2017, Spain’s Parliament approved a legislative proposal that called for the exhumation of Franco’s remains.¹⁵⁸ While the PP was in government, however – which was from 2011 until 2018 –, the proposition saw no practical results. When the PSOE, headed by Pedro Sánchez, was elected for government in 2018, one of its first announcements was its decision to initiate the exhumation process.¹⁵⁹ By that time, the political climate in Spain had evolved into a multi-party system in which five political parties play the most prominent role, namely the PSOE, the PP, the largest centre-right party in the country; Ciudadanos (C’s), a party that started as liberal but turned more rightist during elections; Podemos, a left-wing party formed in 2013, and Vox, which represents a far-right party.¹⁶⁰

It has become clear that around the turn of the century, memory came to play a prominent role in the political differentiation between Right and Left. Besides the increasing volume of historical research explaining what happened during the civil war and the Franco regime, it was especially the Pinochet affair that spurred this division by categorizing political parties along the lines of those wanting to recover Spain’s own historical memory and legacies of repression and those who wanted to maintain the political balance that rested on forgetfulness. Rather than promoting a narrative that emphasized equal responsibility of the war, the recovery of historical memory – especially the images of tortured bodies and discarded remains of leftist victims – led the political Left to underscore the importance of the commemoration of the victims generated by Francoism and Nationalist forces, materialized in the Law of Historical Memory in 2007.

¹⁵⁵ Boyd, “The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain,” 146.

¹⁵⁶ Labanyi, “The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Spain,” 119; Encarnación, “Reconciliation after Democratization,” 453-454.

¹⁵⁷ Labanyi, “The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Spain,” 119-120.

¹⁵⁸ Angosto-Ferrandez, “Mausoleums, National Flags and Regime Crises,” 489.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Gutiérrez, “Spanish election 2019: full results.”

2.4 Memory frameworks in Spain

Throughout the twentieth century, memory frameworks regarding the civil war and the following regime in Spain evolved alongside changes in political and cultural context. After analyzing the political and social developments surrounding Spain's historical memory following the war, this research will zoom in on the promoted memory frameworks that dominated official discourse throughout this period and place them alongside Spain's evolution. These frameworks supported political developments during and after the regime, eventually leading to the rupture of a political consensus based on forgetfulness.

2.4.1: The narrative of unity

Franco's government placed an emphasis on the inadequacy of the Second Republic, stating that it had promoted separatism among the Spanish public. The coup by which Franco had attempted to overthrow the democratic government was described as a "national uprising."¹⁶¹ Such framing underlined Franco as a national leader who had stood up against a failing political regime. The official discourse explained the military uprising as an act of salvation to reunify the country and a necessary response to the destructive actions of leftist parties.¹⁶² Republican followers as well as leftist supporters were thereby blamed for bringing the country to the edge of destruction, and the divisions of the civil war were continued during Franco's dictatorship, strictly separating the 'winners' from the 'defeated.' During the first decades of his regime, Franco sought historical justification for his rule and his government strongly promoted a sense of nostalgia for "a long lost imperial past."¹⁶³ Simultaneously, the dictatorship emphasized values of religious and national unity, in which Franco attempted to impose one Spanish identity on all regions while silencing opposing voices through repression or banishment.

2.4.2 The narrative of progress

Mainly due to two significant developments in the beginning of the 1960s, namely the wish of Spain's public to focus on future progress and the falling level of legitimacy regarding the state's imposed memory discourse, the regime adjusted its official framework. Although the civil war remained the key event by which Franco had 'rescued' the nation, the government now placed the emphasis on their economic achievements. The official narrative thereby

¹⁶¹ Desfor Edles, *Symbol and Ritual in the New Spain*, 5.

¹⁶² Shevel, "The Politics of Memory in a Divided Society, 137.

¹⁶³ Herzberger, *Narrating the Past*, 16; Colmeiro, "A Nation of Ghosts?," 24.

explained that Franco's government had not only brought national and religious unity to Spain, but economic prosperity and peace as well. This economic welfare led to mixed attitudes toward the past during the transition to democracy. Among scholars, the widely followed view that Spain's transition can be seen as a success story is often accompanied by the notion that the "'modernization' process" during Franco's rule has ultimately led to the victory of democracy in the country.¹⁶⁴ The way in which these periods were described has led to the implication that there was a separation between "a brutal and inefficient 'initial Francoism'" and a "modernizing", 'second-phase Francoism'" which in turn implies the presence of a "bad" and "good (or at least tolerable) Francoism."¹⁶⁵ This notion is also found among the general public during the transition and its aftermath. According to surveys, 46.2 percent of the Spanish public believed that the Francoist era had held "both positive and negative" elements, a number that rose to 48.9 percent in 1995.¹⁶⁶

2.4.3 The narrative of equal responsibility

Gradually, collective amnesia came to be regarded as "the best medicine for Spain."¹⁶⁷ In line with this notion, official explanations regarding the outbreak of the civil war evolved into the promotion of a narrative of equal responsibility during the final years of the regime, which explained the war as a national tragedy for which all sides shared equal blame. The silence surrounding the Francoist past that characterized the democratic transition was thereby based on a political consensus of focusing on the future and satisfying a majority of the public.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, the dynamics of Spain's transition were constructed by a gradual process of democratization, rather than an abrupt break from the former regime. Nationalist institutions, backed up by the armed forces, maintained enough power to keep from disappearing.¹⁶⁹ Instead, they transformed alongside the nation and became legitimate in the new democratic society. This not only endorsed the sense of having to remain silent, but also resulted in the legislation of amnesty which, in turn, strengthened the environment of silence as well.

¹⁶⁴ Saz Campos, "Fascism, fascistization and developmentalism in Franco's dictatorship," 344.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Encarnación, "Reconciliation after Democratization," 445.

¹⁶⁷ Richards, "From War Culture to Civil Society," 111.

¹⁶⁸ Encarnación, "Reconciliation after Democratization, 444; Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, 151.

¹⁶⁹ Encarnación, "Justice in Times of Transition," 181.

2.4.4 The narrative of repression

The memory framework in which the Francoist troops are understood as the main instigators of the civil war was confirmed in 2002, when the PSOE promoted a parliamentary statement that condemned Franco's uprising in 1936 as "an antidemocratic act."¹⁷⁰ This framework has been gradually replacing the framework of the transition in Spain, although the level of promoting historical memory has significantly differed over time. That this framework was only partially adopted is shown, for example, in 2012, when Spain's Supreme Court ruled that the Amnesty Law of 1977 would remain in place and that judicial investigations into Franco's crimes would not be compatible with this legislation.¹⁷¹ The victims' "right to truth" was thereby viewed as private and would not be met by national courts.¹⁷² Around the same time, the PP government, elected in 2011, closed the division that oversaw the enactment of the Historical Memory Law. This shows how the political spectrum was still on opposite sides on the matter of recovering Spain's historical memory. As the PP has been founded by former Francoist officials, their "institutional and ideological links" with Francoism have been described as the reason why "conservatives have little interest in remembering and investigating the past."¹⁷³

2.5 Conclusion

This research into Spain's historical background has shown that interpretations regarding Spain's developments in historical memory have differed among scholars. Although it has been widely agreed upon – at least in academic circles – that Franco imposed a repressive regime from above and justified his rule through the pressure of specific historical memory frameworks, this consensus is significantly lessened when investigating the transitional period. The emphasis Franco had placed on the historical memory of Spain's civil war throughout his rule declined during the final years of his dictatorship and was cast aside by the following democracy. Although some scholars such as Juliá (1999) oppose the notion of a pact of silence or amnesia following Franco's death, the majority of academic literature does explain this period through such concepts. Scholars such as Aguilar (1996) and Oxana Shevel (2011) have described the transition in terms of negotiation and pact-making, yet it has been made clear that Spain's transition was not based on agreements between equal political

¹⁷⁰ Encarnación, "Reconciliation after Democratization, 451.

¹⁷¹ Druliolle, "Recovering Historical Memory," 316-317.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 318-319; Encarnación, "Reconciliation after Democratization," 449.

powers as it followed the lines of a gradual transformation in which Francoist institutions became legitimate in the new democracy, rather than a full break from the regime.

It has thereby become clear that scholars have differed in pointing out the motivations for this agreement of silence, although in general terms, all argue for the presence of a national climate of fear and uncertainty at the time of transition. Where Aguilar explains the pact to stem from the fear the country would see another military uprising, Omar Encarnación (2008) describes how people feared accusations of complicity and therefore rather focused on the future. Another point of disagreement among scholars seems to be centered on the national atmosphere at the time. While scholars such as Gunther, Montero and Botella (2004) describe the general climate in Spain as developing along amicable lines, Sánchez-Cuenca and Aguilar show that the transition was accompanied by a high level of violence and social unrest. These differing interpretations of the transitional period show a high level of contrast and lack of consensus regarding the details of the pact of forgetting and the transitional period.

What remains widely agreed upon, however, is that the political elites in Spain did not confront its historical past or undertook many efforts to apply retributive justice. This climate of silence, most scholars agree upon as well, started to change in the 1990s and took a large hit with the establishment of the ARMH in 2000. The recuperation of remains from mass graves reached an enormous audience by benefitting from the coverage in media, and how this range of public attention resulted in political support. Here, it becomes clear that the media plays the role of active agent in shaping the influence of historical memory frameworks.

Although the Law of Historical Memory which passed in 2007 is not widely regarded as a success story in terms of political reconciliation, scholars such as Carolyn Boyd (2008) have described the law as actually having the potential to strengthen forgetfulness, emphasizing the social unrest that stemmed from recoveries in historical memory. In her view, the divisions and complications that accompanied discussions on who was victimized and their deserved compensations led people to want to retain silence to keep the peace in society. Academics like Jo Labanyi (2008), on the other hand, explain the law as “a major step in forcing the issue into the public sphere.”¹⁷⁴ Labanyi thereby describes the law as a big contribution to further breaking down the climate of silence in the country.

¹⁷⁴ Labanyi, “The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Spain,” 120.

One of the main issues this research came across, was the lack of focus in academic literature regarding Spain's politics of memory after 2007, when the Law of Historical Memory passed. Several scholars discussing the topic placed their focus on the period of silence and the lack of national reconciliation and from Franco's death until the Law of Historical Memory. This research, however, will place its focus on the presence of historical memory frameworks in news media during the period surrounding Franco's exhumation in 2019. The recent timing of this event will make this research one of the first academic contributions discussing its meaning for historical memory, as the reburial shows that the law in 2007 did not enhance reconciliation in the country. This research shows that Spain has remained divided on how to face its historical past, and that political elites continue to compete over collective memory frameworks and their implications for national reconciliation. It thereby illustrates that the pact of forgetting implied misleading notions of being able to move on as a nation and not needing to confront historical tensions. Rather than resolve group disagreements and unprocessed suffering, the agreement to remain silent merely postponed the social unrest resulting from these processes. In what follows, this research will show how these tensions came again to the foreground during the time of Franco's reburial and how this event has been presented as the culmination of recovering historical memory in public discourse.

Chapter 3.

Analysis: Narratives in *El País*

Newspaper *El País* published its first article on May 4, 1976, a few months after the death of Francisco Franco.¹⁷⁵ It was founded by Grupo Prisa (*Promotora de Informaciones*, S.A.), the most influential media conglomerate in Spain since the 1980s, and is seen as “a newspaper of record whose editorial and news-gathering routines have been considered an authoritative and professional reference since its beginning.”¹⁷⁶ *El País* represents the first newspaper that was pro-democracy since Franco’s dictatorship, and has come to be known as “a bastion of the reinstatement of democracy” in the country since the attempted coup d’état in 1981, when they published an evening edition defending Spain’s democratic constitution on the same day as the attempted coup took place.¹⁷⁷ Following the failed coup, national elections were won by the PSOE under the leadership of Felipe González. The PSOE then governed Spain continuously for fourteen years and were openly supported by *El País* during these terms.¹⁷⁸

The newspaper has been “the most widely read and influential daily newspaper in the Spanish context of the transition to democracy,” and currently has over 65 million readers worldwide.¹⁷⁹ It has 2 million followers in its social media network and the monthly average of the number of video views is 78 million. Furthermore, *El País* is digitally embodied in four different editions, namely Spanish, English, Portuguese and Catalan.¹⁸⁰ As this research is focused on Spain, the scope of the analysis will contain the national edition of the newspaper. These editions, however, do make clear that publications in *El País* are widely read by newsreaders and therefore carry a significant value in investigating the collective memory frameworks promoted in public discourse regarding the memory and exhumation of Francisco Franco. In this analysis, the focus will be placed on the articles and narratives published by *El País* during the two weeks leading up to the exhumation and the two weeks that follow the event. The narratives mainly emphasized by *El País* (i) confirm and normalize the electoral practices that resulted from the process and stress the hypocrisy of rightist parties in pointing an accusing finger; (ii) highlight the righteousness of the exhumation and frames the event as

¹⁷⁵ Almiron and Segovia, “Financialization, Economic Crisis, and Corporate Strategies in Top Media Companies,” 2894.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 2895.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 2896; PRISA, “El País.”

¹⁸⁰ PRISA, “El País.”

the ultimate democratic victory; and (iii) cast the Franco family in a negative way by underlining their hostility towards the exhumation and the government.

3.1 The instrumentalization of the exhumation

As described in Chapter 1, the national elections in Spain took place on November 10, 2019, 17 days after the exhumation of Franco's remains. Notions of using the exhumation for electoral gain – 'electoralism' - were mostly directed at the PSOE by opposing parties who framed the operation as "un show electoral," an electoral show, designed to win votes.¹⁸¹ *El País*, as well, presents a framework in which they confirm the existence of instrumentalization by the PSOE. However, the newspaper argues that this practice is not only used by the PSOE, but rather by all political parties. It thereby portrays a narrative in which the sole accusation is unjustly placed on the PSOE by other involved, hypocrite parties. In what follows, this research will analyze how this narrative is presented, showing that *El País* takes on a defensive position on behalf of the PSOE and frames opposing parties as nostalgic for Francoism.

The newspaper thereby makes clear that historical memory frameworks are immersed into political debates when journalist Junquera writes: "Franco and historical memory are more present than ever on the agenda and in political discourse."¹⁸² The notion that memory frameworks regarding Franco are part of electoral campaigns is emphasized on October 10, 2019, when the newspaper publishes an article headlined 'Franco in campaign.'¹⁸³ In the article, journalist Teodoro León Gross argues that the memory of Franco plays an important role in the electoral campaigns of all political parties: "Franco is the most important campaign material, considering the two great electoral forces of this cycle: polarization and fragmentation."¹⁸⁴ Gross thereby refers to "la tensión izquierda/derecha," the tension between rightist and leftist parties, arguing that memory frameworks of Franco have a divisive effect within the political arena. "It is difficult to measure the Franco effect but the beneficiaries at the polls would be, for sure, PSOE and Vox. On the Right, only Vox is willing to openly capitalize on the emotional spoils of the exhumation; an event that the PSOE will make part

¹⁸¹ Juanma Lamet et al., "“El pasado, pasado está”, “no tocaba”, “indiferencia”, “un show electoral”, así han reaccionado los partidos a la exhumación.”

¹⁸² Original quotation: "Franco y la memoria histórica están más presentes que nunca en la agenda y el discurso político."; Junquera, "La exhumación de Franco el pasado 24 de octubre ha disparado la presencia de la memoria histórica."

¹⁸³ Original quotation: 'Franco en campaña.'

¹⁸⁴ Original quotation: "Franco es material de campaña de primera, considerando las dos grandes fuerzas electorales de este ciclo: la polarización y la fragmentación."; Gross, "Franco en campaña."

of heritage on the Left. . .”¹⁸⁵ Consequently, Gross describes attempts from Vox to criminalize the PSOE in mentioning historical events such as “the blow of ’36.”¹⁸⁶ He states: “Sánchez takes this opportunity to align the whole Right with Vox, as in the spring, placing the PP among those nostalgic for Francoism, and if it is necessary also Cs . . .”¹⁸⁷ Gross thereby argues that the memory of Francoism and the exhumation are not only present in the electoral race, but are explicitly used by all parties for political gain. By describing a dynamic in which Vox criminalizes the PSOE through historical events and the PSOE accuses the opposition of being ‘nostalgic for Francoism,’ the article shows that the political debate in Spain, as well as the division between political parties, remains intertwined with historical memory frameworks. Frameworks of Francoism are thereby presented in *El País* as being used by both Vox and the PSOE to present a ‘common enemy’ to unify against, Vox through Francoist rhetoric in which the Left is presented as terroristic, and the PSOE by aligning their opposition with Francoism.

On October 12, 2019, Gross publishes another article in which he discusses allegations against Sánchez of using the exhumation for electoral gain, made by the PP and Vox. Here, Gross defends Sánchez by stating that during election times, all political parties use electioneering to gain votes: “He could have hardly done something in 2019 that did not lend itself to the accusation of electoralism. Of course, not only him. Those who accuse the President of electoralism are also doing electoralism. The electoral cycle is for everyone.”¹⁸⁸ In this quote, Gross not only normalizes the appearance of electoralism on the side of the PSOE, but argues that the absence of its display would be impossible. Every political action during election times, he argues, can be seen as pursuing electoral gain. Furthermore, Gross implies the hypocrisy of parties such as Vox and the PP in pointing the finger to Sánchez while, as he argues, performing electoralism themselves as well. Natalia Junquera underlines this view, in an article published by the newspaper on November 5, 2019:

“Before the official start of the campaign, the entire opposition, from the PP to Unidas Podemos, accused Pedro Sánchez of “electoralism” when the remains of

¹⁸⁵ Original quotation: “Es difícil medir el efecto Franco pero los beneficiarios en las urnas, con seguridad, serían PSOE y Vox. En la derecha, solo Vox está dispuesto a rentabilizar abiertamente el botín emocional de la exhumación; activo que en la izquierda patrimonializará el PSOE. . .”; Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Original quotation: “El pucherazo del 36.”; Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Original quotation: “Sánchez aprovecha para alinear a toda la derecha con Vox, como en primavera, metiendo ahí de matute al PP entre los nostálgicos del franquismo, y si hace falta también a Cs . . .”; Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Original quotation: “Así que difícilmente hubiera podido hacer algo en 2019 que no se prestara a la acusación de electoralismo. Eso sí, no sólo él. Quienes acusan de electoralismo al presidente también están haciendo electoralismo. El ciclo electoral es para todos.”; Gross, “Franco... ¿electoralismo?”

Franco were finally transferred from the Valley of the Fallen to the cemetery of Mingorrubio, in El Pardo, despite the fact that it had been approved in Congress without any votes against . . . That was the same argument supported by the grandchildren of the dictator, who described the exhumation as “an impudent media circus that only seeks propaganda and electoral revenue.” In reality, the government announced that the transfer of Franco’s remains would be carried out in July 2018 . . . but the pressure of the family, who filed judicial appeals until the last minute, delayed the operation.”¹⁸⁹

Junquera thereby argues that the accusation of electoralism is solely placed on Sánchez, and unjustly so. As she describes, the decision for exhuming Franco’s body was made in the previous year and supported by the entire Congress. By further explaining that the postponed date of the event was caused by delays initiated by the Franco family, Junquera refutes the claim that the PSOE deliberately timed the exhumation to be before the election. All this endorses the notion that the PSOE’s opposing parties are hypocritical in accusing Sánchez of electoralism, since they approved the transfer in the previous year while now showing resistance, even though the PSOE is not responsible for the delay in the operation.

The narrative in which the PSOE is promoted and parties who oppose the exhumation are criticized, is further underlined when journalist Almudena Grandes discusses the presence of historical memory in the country:

“In a normal country, all parties in the parliamentary arch, beyond the self-exclusion of the extreme right, would have celebrated the news. . . . The denunciation of the presumed electoral advantage that the PSOE may extract from an initiative that . . . no Government has taken before, it should be relegated in favor of the general interest and, above all, of the ethical debt that the Spanish State contracted with the victims of Francoism.”¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Original quotation: “Antes del inicio oficial de la campaña, toda la oposición, desde el PP a Unidas Podemos, acusó a Pedro Sánchez de “electoralismo” por el momento en que finalmente se produjo el traslado de los restos de Franco del Valle de los Caídos al cementerio de Mingorrubio, en El Pardo, pese a que en el Congreso se había aprobado sin votos en contra . . . Esa fue la misma tesis que sostuvieron los nietos del dictador, que calificaron la exhumación de “impúdico circo mediático que solo busca propaganda y rédito electoral”. En realidad, el Gobierno llegó a anunciar que el traslado de los restos de Franco se realizaría en julio de 2018 . . . pero el pulso de la familia, que presentó recursos judiciales hasta el último minuto, retrasó la operación.”; Junquera, “La exhumación de Franco el pasado 24 de octubre ha disparado la presencia de la memoria histórica.”

¹⁹⁰ Original quotation: “En un país normal, todos los partidos del arco parlamentario, más allá de la autoexclusión de la extrema derecha, habrían celebrado la noticia. . . . La denuncia de la presunta ventaja electoral que pueda extraer el PSOE de una iniciativa que . . . ningún Gobierno ha tomado antes que este debería

The quote expresses a sense of abnormality in the rejections of the exhumation, promoting the PSOE and criticizing objecting parties at the same time by stating that the exhumation is in favor of the general interest and that the government carries an ethical debt towards Francoist victims.

The ethical significance of the event, however, is represented on a much lower level than its political significance. Historical memory frameworks regarding Francoism are thereby used by the newspaper to promote leftist political parties. This is, for example, shown in another article by Grandes discussing the reburial:

“Those who say that the fate of Franco does not interest the citizens of this country, despise the interests of at least tens of thousands of Spanish families who, in all certainty, were comforted by what they saw last Thursday. . . . At last, the Franco’s have lost, they will have understood and they will have understood well. Another thing is that the situation we are going through has made this operation urgent. Because on November 10 there are elections. Because there is a possibility that the Right will gain votes and rule. In that case, the Franco’s would have won again. Perhaps the shameful performance of the dictator’s grandchildren will serve to incentivize leftist voters.”¹⁹¹

Here, Grandes aligns the political Right with Francoism, arguing that if the Right wins, the Franco’s win. Although she starts off by stating the moral significance of the event towards the victims of Francoism, she continues by expressing the importance of the exhumation as resulting from political possibilities. Grandes seems to encourage leftist electoralism, by stating that the urgency of the event results from the elections in November. Franco’s grandchildren are thereby not only negatively portrayed in this quote, they are also used to promote leftist votes and to represent rightist parties.

relegarse a favor del interés general y, sobre todo, de la deuda ética que el Estado español contrajo con las víctimas del franquismo.”; Grandes, “Sin arreglo.”

¹⁹¹ Original quotation: “Quienes consideran que el destino de Franco no interesa a los ciudadanos de este país, desprecian los intereses de, al menos, decenas de miles de familias españolas que, con toda certeza, se sintieron reconfortadas por lo que pudieron contemplar el pasado jueves. . . . Por fin, los Franco han perdido, habrán entendido, y habrán entendido bien. Otra cosa es que la situación por la que atravesamos haya revestido de urgencia esta operación. Porque el 10 de noviembre hay elecciones. Porque existe la posibilidad de que la derecha sume y gobierne. Porque en ese caso, los Franco habrían vuelto a ganar. Tal vez, la bochornosa actuación de los nietos del dictador sirva para incentivar a los votantes de izquierda.”; Grandes, “Nubes.”

It has become clear that *El País* has presented a narrative in which electoralism is normalized and ascribed to all political parties participating in the election of November 2019. The memory of Franco and his exhumation thereby played an important role in the electoral campaigns of both rightist and leftist political parties. The newspaper relates these memory frameworks to a deepening division in Spain's politics by showing that they are used by both sides of the spectrum to portray their opposition as the common enemy.

3.2 A righteous victory for the democratic government

While *El País* recognizes that the proximity of the exhumation to the November elections results in electoralist practices, they do not present this as having a negative effect on the democratic nature of the event. Rather, the newspaper presents a narrative in which they frame the exhumation as politically righteous and strengthening the level of democracy in the country. Next, this research will analyze this narrative in which *El País* argues for Franco's exhumation as a democratic victory, stressing its political righteousness and ascribing this justice to a natural expression of Spain's democracy.

The righteousness of the exhumation is highlighted in the newspaper throughout the investigated time period. One of the views supporting this narrative explains the Valley of the Fallen as a place that supports the continuing homage to Franco. On October 13, 2019, Natalia Junquera writes:

“The Valley of the Fallen is still controlled by the same regulations that the regime left tied and well tied behind. . . . A monument that today does not fulfill any other function than that of the day it was inaugurated: to immortalize the Francoist victory in ‘the Crusade.’ The exhumation and transfer of Franco’s remains this month will resolve this anomaly, which is about to turn 44; the Valley of the Fallen will no longer belong to a dictator and it will be democracy that decides, for the first time, what to do with the monument.”¹⁹²

¹⁹² Original quotation: “El Valle de los Caídos se rige todavía por los mismos preceptos que el Régimen dejó atados y bien atados. . . . Un monumento que hoy no cumple una función distinta de la del día en que se inauguró: inmortalizar la victoria franquista en “la Cruzada”. La exhumación y traslado de los restos de Franco resolverá este mes esa anomalía, que está a punto de cumplir 44 años; el Valle de los Caídos dejará de pertenecer a un dictador y será la democracia la que decida, por primera vez, qué hacer con el monumento.”; Junquera, “El Valle de los Caídos se rige todavía por los mismos preceptos que el Régimen...”

Junquera hereby states that the Valley of the Fallen revolves around honoring the former dictator rather than the victims of the civil war. Criticism towards Franco's remains in the Valley is underlined when she states that "the victims will stop sharing the place with their main executioner," a statement that she repeats in other articles during the investigated time frame as well, contributing to the notion that the exhumation is righteous and that it expresses the strength of Spain's democracy.¹⁹³

Junquera furthermore endorses the narrative in *El País* in which the victory of democracy is stressed, by portraying the remains of Franco in the Valley as an 'anomaly' of Spain's democracy. Other remnants of Francoism in Spain's political arena are thereby mainly denied by the newspaper. This notion is confirmed in an article written by the editorial staff of *El País*, in which they state: "The defeat of the dictatorship was the Constitution, not the exhumation of Franco," by which they refer to the Constitution passed in 1978.¹⁹⁴ The newspaper thereby presents a framework in which "the real problem with Franco ended the day the Constitution came into force."¹⁹⁵ This narrative endorses the view that Franco's grave in the Valley represented the 'anomaly in democracy,' the last battle against Francoism, which was consequently won by the PSOE. This is confirmed, for example, when journalists Junquera and Carlos E. Cué describe the exhumation as an "historical decision with which Spain definitively lifted the plaque of Francoism," thereby presenting the exhumation as the final defeat of Francoism.¹⁹⁶ This narrative is furthered by headlines like 'The democracy buries Franco'¹⁹⁷ and 'Spain ends the last great symbol of the dictatorship.'¹⁹⁸ The defeat of the dictatorship is shown by statements such as "After 44 years, democracy has overcome its last obstacles"¹⁹⁹ and "Starting today, democracy will decide."²⁰⁰ The emphasis *El País* places on the democratic nature of the exhumation especially becomes clear when this narrative is compared to the other newspapers. The image of a victorious democracy is contrary to the narrative portrayed in *El Mundo*, for example, which frames the exhumation as countering the level of democracy in the country: "Today, . . . Democracy has expired," showing the

¹⁹³ Original quotation: "las víctimas dejarán de compartir espacio con su principal verdugo."; Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Original quotation: "La derrota de la dictadura fue la Constitución, no la exhumación de Franco."; *El País*, "Parte del pasado."

¹⁹⁵ Original quotation: "El verdadero problema con Franco terminó el día que entró en vigor la Constitución."; Gascón, "Proyectos para el pasado."

¹⁹⁶ Original quotation: "La decisión histórica con la que España levantó definitivamente la losa del franquismo."; Junquera and Cué, "España levanta la losa de Franco."

¹⁹⁷ Original quotation: 'La democracia entierra a Franco.'

¹⁹⁸ Original quotation: 'España pone fin al último gran símbolo de la dictadura.'

¹⁹⁹ Original quotation: "Cuarenta y cuatro años después, la democracia ha salvado los últimos obstáculos."; Junquera, "La larga batalla para romper lo que quedó "atado y bien atado"."

²⁰⁰ Original quotation: "La democracia decidirá a partir de hoy."; Junquera, "La democracia entierra a Franco."

differing presentations by the newspapers and the emphasis *El País* places on the exhumation as a victory for democracy.²⁰¹

Although most of the articles in the newspaper follow the statement by the editorial office that the political practice of Francoism ended in 1978 with the Constitution, the absence of reconciliation since the transition is recognized as well. In an article discussing the development of historical memory of Franco in the country, journalist Angel Viñas describes: “More than 40 years after his death and the political, institutional and cultural dismantling of the apparatus created during his dictatorship, Spanish society has not been reconciled with a past that contains more shadows than lights, . . . always unevenly distributed.”²⁰² While Viñas affirms the dismantling of the regime in the 1970s, he underlines the endurance of inequality and absence of reconciliation as well. On the other hand, the democratic transition, which the newspaper frames as fully achieved in 1978, is underlined as a political success by *El País*. In an article discussing the transition and exhumation, journalist Daniel Gavela states: “For me, brave were those who, having faced death in the civil war, decided to bury hatred in a pact that has given peace and prosperity for the longest time in our history.”²⁰³ Its success is further underlined in an article by jurist Francesc de Carreras, discussing the transition: “Shortly after his death, we had changed the political system and in a few years our country had been profoundly transformed for the better. . . . Franco and Francoism had gone down in history.”²⁰⁴ The difference in the level of volume dedicated to these frameworks, in which the political success is highlighted while the developments of reconciliation are mostly neglected, endorses the notion that *El País* partially adopts aspects of the framework of silence that surrounded the transitional period and its aftermath. This notion is furthered when journalist J.A. Aunión portrays an interview with historian Fernando del Rey regarding Republican repression during the civil war. The war is thereby referred to as a “fratricidal conflict” by Aunión, a narrative representing the framework of equal responsibility, highly promoted during the period of silence.

²⁰¹ Original quotation: “En el día de hoy, . . . La democracia ha vencido.”; Cruz, “El último parte: Francisco Franco abandona el Valle de los Caídos.”

²⁰² Original quotation: “Transcurridos más de 40 años desde su fallecimiento y del desmantelamiento político, institucional y cultural del aparato creado durante su dictadura, la sociedad española no se ha reconciliado con un pasado que contiene más sombras que luces, . . . siempre repartidos desigualmente.”; Viñas, “Franco y el 24-O.”

²⁰³ Original quotation: “Para mí, valentía la tuvieron los que, habiéndose enfrentado a muerte en la Guerra Civil, decidieron enterrar el odio en un pacto que ha dado la paz y la prosperidad más larga de nuestra historia.”; Gavela, “Que Vox os lo premie.”

²⁰⁴ Original quotation: “Poco después de su muerte habíamos cambiado de sistema político y en pocos años nuestro país se había transformado profundamente para bien. . . . Franco y el franquismo habían pasado a la historia.”; De Carreras, “Demasiada pompa para tan poca circunstancia.”

Another aspect strongly related to the representation of the political success of the transition by the newspaper, is the image of Spain as legitimate part of the European Union. This is shown, for example, in an article describing Franco's life course: "When he died, Francoism was already a corpse because Spanish society was already overwhelmingly committed to the democratic culture of its western environment."²⁰⁵ Journalist Moradiellos thereby explains the defeat of Francoism as a result of Spain's commitment to 'western' values. The political success of the transition and the relationship between Spain and Europe is endorsed when De Carreras describes: "I only wanted Franco and his time to move into the attic of history . . . that our political system resembled that of our neighbors . . . and we entered as full members in the then-named European Economic Community, today the European Union."²⁰⁶ De Carreras thereby aligns the wish to forget Francoism with political practices of Europe, underlines Spain's legitimacy in belonging to the EU and frames this legitimacy as resulting from the success of the transition.

Here, this research has shown that *El País* presents a narrative in which the exhumation is viewed as strengthening the democratic nature of the country. The newspaper thereby aligns the morality of the exhumation with political practices, framing the event as the result of democracy and its final victory over the dictatorship. This narrative, through which the transition is framed as a political success and the Franco's remains in the Valley as an exception, an 'anomaly,' endorses the view that the repressive regime has left the country divided, as well as a partial adoption of frameworks promoted during the transition, in which the main focus was placed on the success of a democratic future in the country. The positive light shone on the transition thereby focuses on the political success in ending Francoism, whereas the reconciliatory success is questioned. This, in turn, closely connects to the narrative the newspaper presents regarding Franco and his family, who are portrayed as opponents of the government.

3.3 Spain vs. the Franco family

On October 15, 2019, *El País* published an article headlined 'The general has no one who loves him,' followed by the introduction "Your disgrace, Paco, is that you are a tumor and

²⁰⁵ Original quotation: "Cuando tuvo lugar su muerte, el franquismo era ya un cadáver porque la sociedad española estaba ya abrumadoramente comprometida con la cultura democrática de su entorno occidental."; Moradiellos, "Franco: un caudillo que gobernó 40 años."

²⁰⁶ Original quotation: "Solo deseaba que Franco y su tiempo pasaran al desván de la historia . . . que su sistema político se asemejara al de nuestros vecinos, . . . y entráramos como miembros de pleno derecho en la entonces denominada Comunidad Económica Europea, hoy Unión Europea."; De Carreras, "Demasiada pompa para tan poca circunstancia."

they put you where they put you.”²⁰⁷ The quote immediately represents the narrative *El País* has portrayed regarding Franco and his family, in which they are posed as standing against Spain’s current democratic society. The newspaper zooms in on the protests made by the Franco family and the prior of the Valley to the exhumation, a legal battle that is presented by *El País* as a struggle between democratic Spain and the legacy of a repressive dictator, personalized in the Franco family. In what follows, this research will analyze how the Franco family is cast in a negative light by *El País* regarding their position towards the government and the exhumation.

Much more than the other investigated newspapers, *El País* places a focus on the struggles between the Spanish government and the Franco family. This is explicitly mentioned by headlines such as ‘Tension and hostility between the government and the family.’²⁰⁸ The newspaper frames the Franco family as the adversarial party in the conflict. This is shown by numerous examples, such as the headline ‘The Franco’s threaten the Constitutional Court with turning to Europe if they don’t pronounce within 24 hours,’ which implies that the family has a threatening attitude regarding the exhumation.²⁰⁹ Another example is shown on the day of the exhumation when *El País* published an article with the headline ‘The family and the prior, against everyone,’ a powerful statement that singles out the Franco family and places them against the entire Spanish public.²¹⁰ In the article, journalist Casqueiro describes: “The Franco’s have done everything that was possible to prevent, paralyze and condition an operation that Sánchez had promised would take place “soon” and that surprised the government due to its complexity.”²¹¹ Casqueiro here frames the Franco’s as the adversarial party in the matter, doing everything in their power to work against the government in this operation.

Another example in which the Franco family is negatively portrayed by *El País* describes them on the day of the exhumation: “The twenty-two grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the dictator did not want to go unnoticed at any time and staged various incidents . . . The Franco’s had prepared several measures to convert the exhumation, carefully calculated by the government of Pedro Sánchez, into some kind of tribute to their

²⁰⁷ Original quotation: “Tu desgracia, Paco, es que eres un incordio te pongan donde te pongan.”; Concostrina, “El general no tiene quien le quiera.”

²⁰⁸ Original quotation: ‘Tensión y hostilidad entre el Gobierno y la familia.’

²⁰⁹ Original quotation: ‘Los Franco amenazan al Constitucional con recurrir a Europa si no se pronuncian en 24 horas.’

²¹⁰ Original quotation: ‘La batalla de los Franco y el prior del Valle contra todos.’

²¹¹ Original quotation: “Los francos han hecho todo lo posible para prevenir, paralizar y condicionar una operación que Sánchez había prometido que se llevaría a cabo "pronto" y que sorprendió al gobierno por su complejidad.”; Casqueiro, “La batalla de los Franco y el prior del Valle contra todos.”

grandfather.”²¹² The quote frames the Franco family in a discrediting daylight, by arguing that they staged multiple incidents and had calculated in advance how to transform the event into a tribute to the dictator. Simultaneously, journalist Javier Casqueiro emphasizes that it was Sánchez and his government who planned the exhumation. By highlighting this, he endorses not only the image that the PSOE is solely responsible for executing the exhumation, but also the view that the party and the Franco family are on opposite sides of the issue.

The narrative in which the Franco family is presented as confrontational is further confirmed in *El País* in an interview with Francis Franco, the oldest grandson of the former dictator. The questions addressed to Franco’s grandson thereby imply a discrediting framework in which the family is placed. This is shown when journalist Casqueiro asks:

Q: “Does the family speak of humiliation and insult?”

R: “How is it understood that the government does not let us put a flag of Spain on the coffin?”

Q: “Because it may seem a privilege or provocation to the victims of the dictatorship.”²¹³

By implying humiliation or insult on the part of the Franco family, Casqueiro enforces the image of a struggle between the government and the family. Furthermore, he defends the government in their decision to refuse the presence of a flag on the coffin. The narrative in which the exhumation is defended is further underlined in the last question Casqueiro asks Franco: “Can’t the Franco family understand that in a democracy, in the middle of the 21st century, with a parliamentary majority that has voted in favor of the exhumation and with unanimous support from the judiciary, it cannot be consented that a mausoleum pays homage to a dictator?”²¹⁴ Casqueiro’s terminology frames the exhumation as the natural outcome of a modern-day democracy, thereby reinforcing again the view that the actions of the government are representative for Spain’s democracy. Furthermore, by mentioning the support of Spain’s parliament and judiciary, the family is more singled out.

Here, the narrative has been analyzed in which the Franco family is portrayed as confrontational and opposed to Spain’s democracy. The newspaper stresses the protests and

²¹² Original quotation: “Los 22 nietos y bisnietos del dictador no quisieron pasar inadvertidos en ningún momento y protagonizaron diversos incidentes . . . Los Franco tenían preparadas varias acciones para convertir en lo posible el acto de la exhumación, minuciosamente calculado por el Gobierno de Pedro Sánchez, en algún tipo de homenaje a su abuelo.”; Casqueiro, “Tensión y hostilidad entre el Gobierno y la familia.”

²¹³ Original quotation: Q: “¿La familia habla de humillación y ultraje?” R: “¿Cómo se entiende que el Gobierno no nos deje poner una bandera de España en el féretro?” Q: “Porque a las víctimas de la dictadura les puede parecer un privilegio o una provocación.”; Casqueiro, “Francis Franco: “Pelear contra un Gobierno y el BOE es imposible”.”

²¹⁴ Original quotation: “¿La familia Franco no puede entender que en una democracia, en pleno siglo XXI, con una mayoría parlamentaria que ha votado a favor de la exhumación, con un respaldo unánime del poder judicial, no se puede consentir un mausoleo homenaje a un dictador?”; Ibid.

incomprehension regarding the exhumation on the side of the Franco's. Simultaneously, the newspaper frames the event as a natural outcome of Spain's modern-day democracy, placing the family on the opposite side of this concept.

3.4 Conclusion

This analysis has shown the main framework presented by *El País* in which the value of the exhumation is highlighted to promote leftist sentiments. The newspaper thereby normalizes the instrumentalist use of the exhumation by political parties, stating that the proximity of the event to the November elections has made these practices inevitable. It takes on a defensive position on behalf of the PSOE, by showing the hypocrisy of the parties accusing the former of electoralism. The framework in which the PSOE is promoted is endorsed by the narrative in which the exhumation is viewed as the defeat of Francoism. *El País* frames the event as the country burying the dictatorship, literally expressed by headlines such as 'Democracy buries Franco.' The PSOE is thereby praised as the initiator of the event and the executioner through which 'democracy' buries the former dictator. Simultaneously, the newspaper takes on a supportive approach towards the transition by emphasizing its success both in ending Francoism and becoming a legitimate democracy, confirmed by the country's membership in the European Union. All of these notions are mobilized to promote the political Left and especially the PSOE, and are supported by the critical approach *El País* takes on towards rightist parties and the Franco family, who is presented as the confrontational adversary of the government in this conflict. The newspaper thereby gives an overview of the struggle between Spain's government and the family and underlines the protests of the latter. Here, it is stressed that the exhumation has naturally flown from Spain's level of democracy and that the family opposes this practice. Simultaneously, more emphasis is placed on rightist parties being nostalgic for Francoism, and leftist parties as opposing the former regime. After all, as argued by *El País*, when Right wins, the Franco's win.

Chapter 4.

Analysis: Narratives in *eldiario.es*

Eldiario.es is an online newspaper in Spain, and was founded in 2012 by Ignacio Escolar.²¹⁵ Escolar had worked in television and had founded daily newspaper *El Público* before he launched *eldiario.es*.²¹⁶ The digital newspaper holds a different finance model than other newspapers in the country, in which it depends on its “socios,” its members, to support them financially.²¹⁷ These members exceed a number of 20.000 in 2017 and are responsible for 30 percent of the newspaper’s annual income. As Escolar explains, they do not pay the newspaper so they can read the news. Rather, they contribute financially so the information published in *eldiario.es* can be “freely spread and thus gain social impact.”²¹⁸ The membership program thereby constitutes “the key element” of the newspaper’s business model and “invites readers to belong to a community of citizens sharing values like equality, democratization, social justice and more importantly, the need for free independent journalism without restraints.”²¹⁹ Membership generates advantages such as getting access to the news a few hours before others, articles and pages without ads, and invitations for events and discounts. This, according to Escolar, contributes to the independence of the newspaper since they do not depend on advertisements to generate revenue.²²⁰

Although the content in *eldiario.es* appeals to the political Left, the newspaper does not support a particular political party. In an interview conducted in 2015, Escolar explained: “We are progressive, not political. We support human rights, equality, transparency, independence, and a strong democracy. But we are not connected to any political party or business interest.”²²¹ In defending these issues, the newspaper publishes the ‘Zona Crítica,’ a channel in which political opinions are expressed through columns. This channel features a significant level of publications which are highly critical towards Francoism, the political Right and the pact of forgetting during the transition. While these columns do not constitute the news, they are part of the framework *eldiario.es* presents and are therefore significant for the analysis. In what follows, this research will analyze the presented framework regarding

²¹⁵ Eldiario.es, “El estreno de eldiario.es será el 18 de septiembre.”

²¹⁶ Breiner, “Spain’s El Diario Shows That Good Journalism Can Be Good Business.”

²¹⁷ Sánchez and Escolar, “Eldiario.es’s business model.”

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Breiner, “Spain’s El Diario Shows That Good Journalism Can Be Good Business.”

²²¹ Breiner, “In Spain, two digital journalism success stories.”

Franco and his exhumation during the two weeks before and after the event. The main narratives that constitute this framework (i) confirm the instrumentalization of the exhumation and criticize rightist parties for objecting to the event, thereby framing them as nostalgic for Francoism and as representative for a continuation of a history of silence; (ii) emphasize that the exhumation is merely a step in the right direction rather than the ultimate defeat of the dictatorship; and (iii) highlight the villainy of Francoism and its perpetuation in Spain's society by focusing on the victims of the regime who continue to suffer.

4.1 The instrumentalization of the exhumation

As in the other investigated newspapers, the proximity of Franco's exhumation to the November elections is highlighted in *eldiario.es* across the articles reporting on the topic. Practices of electoralism are thereby discussed and confirmed in the newspaper which endorses the notion that these are not a strange occurrence. Yet where *El País* takes on a clear position defending the PSOE in such practices, *eldiario.es* does not show an obvious preference for the party. The newspaper does, however, assume a highly critical approach towards the political Right. They spend a significant volume of their articles regarding the exhumation presenting the electoralist practices of especially the PP, Ciudadanos and Vox. Next, this research will analyze how the instrumentalization of the exhumation is presented in *eldiario.es*, showing that the newspaper normalizes such practices and places the focus on rightist parties. It thereby emphasizes the hypocrisy of these parties in their accusations towards the PSOE and frames the parties as a continuation of Spain's past.

Like the other investigated newspapers, *eldiario.es* does not deny the presence of electoralism in the process of exhuming Franco. This is shown when journalist Irene Castro writes on October 17, 2019: "Sánchez will end a path plagued with obstacles at the gates of the 10N electoral campaign to carry out one of his most symbolic measures, and with which they in Moncloa hope to overcome the stagnation predicted by the polls for the PSOE."²²² Moncloa thereby refers to the Palace of Moncloa, the official office and residence of Spain's Prime Minister. The quote indicates the electoral use of the exhumation by Sánchez by stating that the PSOE hopes to overcome the anticipated stagnation by carrying out the exhumation. Castro, unlike what is shown in Chapter 5 regarding representations in *El Mundo*, thereby

²²² Original quotation: "Sánchez pondrá fin a un camino plagado de trabas a las puertas de la campaña electoral del 10N para llevar a cabo una de sus medidas más simbólicas y con la que en Moncloa confían en remontar el estancamiento que pronostican las encuestas para el PSOE."; Castro, "El juez que criticó la memoria histórica se rinde tras los varapalos del Supremo, el Consitucional y Estrasburgo."

does not condemn the party for such practices or downplays the significance of the event by arguing that the symbolism of the exhumation is tainted through politics. This notion of leftist electoralism is confirmed when journalist Iñigo Sáenz de Ugarte writes on the day of the exhumation: “The electoral impact of the measure remains to be seen. At best, it may only serve to keep PSOE voters happy in the April elections.”²²³ While Sáenz de Ugarte questions the effectiveness of the event for electoral gain, he does imply the connection between the exhumation and the possibility of winning political votes for the PSOE by using terminology in which the exhumation may “serve” to keep or win votes.

Furthermore, *eldiario.es* confirms the use of electoralism by not only the PSOE, but by their opponents as well. On October 23, 2019, journalist Iñigo Aduriz presents an explanation on electoralist practices by the PP, Ciudadanos and Vox:

“The three rightist parties that fight for each vote of the general elections on November 10 aimed for the strategy of discrediting the exhumation of Franco from the Valley of the Fallen, the public mausoleum in which tens of thousands of victims of the dictatorship are buried. None of them has promised to reverse the decision which, according to the polls, has the support of the majority of Spaniards, including a high percentage of their voters.”²²⁴

Aduriz argues here that condemning Franco’s exhumation is a strategy conducted by the rightist parties to win as many votes as possible in November. He thereby not only confirms their electoralism, but implies their hypocrisy as well by mentioning that none of the parties has opted for reversing the exhumation, supported by the majority of the Spanish public. By using this phrasing Aduriz draws the notion that the parties in question use the exhumation to gain electoral votes, but do not actually want to reverse it out of fear it may cost them votes, thereby underlining their hypocrisy and insincerity.

The narrative in which the PP, Vox and Ciudadanos are framed as hypocritical in their accusations of leftist electoralism is underlined by Aduriz on the day of the exhumation:

²²³ Original quotation: “El impacto electoral de la medida está por ver. Como mucho, es posible que sólo sirva para tener contentos a los votantes del PSOE en las elecciones de abril.”; Sáenz de Ugarte, “El bicho abandona volando el mausoleo de Cuelgamuros.”

²²⁴ Original quotation: “Las tres derechas que pelean por cada voto de las generales del 10 de noviembre se apuntaban a la estrategia de desacreditar la exhumación de Franco del Valle de los Caídos, el mausoleo público en el que están enterradas decenas de miles de víctimas de la dictadura. Ninguno de ellos se ha comprometido en cambio a revertir la decisión que, según las encuestas, cuenta con el respaldo de la mayoría de los españoles incluido un alto porcentaje de sus votantes.”; Aduriz, “El PP y Franco: de alabar al dictador en la Fundación de AP a evitar condenar el regimen y callar ante la exhumación.”

“The three political forces have tried to ignore the last milestone of democracy, arguing that the exhumation is an “electoralist” act of the socialist executive power, despite the fact that the exhumation was approved more than a year ago by both the Council of Ministers and by the Courts and has only been delayed because of the appeals that were brought before the court by the dictator’s family, which were eventually rejected. In addition, none of the three has condemned acts of exaltation regarding the dictatorship and the praises of Franco carried out by different citizens in the last hours.”²²⁵

The quote criticizes the three rightist parties, underlining that their accusations of electoralism are unsubstantiated since the exhumation, approved by the ministers and the Courts in the previous year, was delayed “only because” the Franco family had brought appeals before the court. Furthermore, by stating that the PP, Ciudadanos and Vox tried to ignore “the last milestone of democracy” and that they did not condemn acts glorifying the Franco regime, Aduriz implies their affiliation with the dictatorship and frames them as opposing Spain’s democratic development. The exhumation and the recovery of Spain’s historical memory is thereby presented as strengthening Spain’s democracy.

This narrative portrays rightist parties as a continuation of Spain’s past in their approach to protest a recovery of historical memory and continue practices of silence. This is further underlined in an article published on the day of the exhumation, in which journalist José Precado reports the event. After describing how the PP, Ciudadanos and Vox refused to be present at the exhumation, he argues: “The neo-Franco sectors have not only tried to stop the transfer of the remains with tricks . . . they have also exhausted legal ways to try to avoid the removal of the coffin to the Mingorrubio cemetery. Aside from the poetic justice that involves seeing Francoism plead before the Constitutional Court, the volume of lawsuits all these months have also shown how normal the defense of the dictator is in Spain in 2019.”²²⁶

²²⁵ Original quotation: “Las tres fuerzas políticas han tratado de ignorar el último hito de la democracia al considerar que la exhumación supone un acto “electoralista” del Ejecutivo socialista, a pesar de que el desentierro fue aprobado hace más de un año tanto por el Consejo de Ministros como por Las Cortes y se ha ido retrasando únicamente por los distintos recursos presentados ante la Justicia por la familia del dictador, que finalmente fueron rechazados. Ninguno de los tres ha condenado, además, los actos de exaltación de la dictadura y las loas a Franco realizadas por distintos ciudadanos en las últimas horas.”; Aduriz, “La derecha se borra de una jornada histórica e impide el consenso de Estado sobre la exhumación de Franco.”

²²⁶ Original quotation: “Los sectores neofranquistas no solo han tratado de frenar el traslado de los restos con supercherías . . . también han agotado las vías legales para tratar de evitar la retirada del féretro al cementerio de Mingorrubio. Aparte de la justicia poética que implica ver al franquismo vivo pleiteando ante el Constitucional, la batería de demandas judiciales y todos estos meses han servido también para comprobar lo normalizada que

Precedo thereby portrays a narrative in which the presence of Francoist practices is emphasized, arguing that the anti-exhumation lawsuits have shown that it is still normal to defend Franco in contemporary Spain. Furthermore, by using the term “neo-Franco sectors” the continuation of Franco is additionally underlined. The critical approach towards the Right is further underscored by the headline ‘The Right is erased from a historic day and prevents the state consensus regarding the exhumation of Franco,’ published on the day of the exhumation, emphasizing that it is the Right that does not take part in this development of Spain’s (democratic) history and prevents political consensus in the country.²²⁷

Ties of rightist parties to the former dictatorship are underlined even more on October 23, when *eldiario.es* publishes the article ‘The PP and Franco: from praising the dictator at the foundation of the AP to avoiding condemning the regime and remaining silent before the exhumation,’ a headline that already implies strong ties between the PP and Franco.²²⁸ In the article, Aduriz describes the history of the PP and how it is intertwined with Francoist practices by mentioning numerous examples in which the party rallied for the dictator, refused to condemn his rule or voted against laws promoting historical memory. This image of rightist parties continuing Franco’s legacy is strengthened on October 23, 2019, when the newspaper publishes a column in which Gumersindo Lafuente writes:

“We cannot forget that even today there are many who place the profile on themselves when we talk about the dictatorship. Vox is pure Francoism, nostalgia packaged in a political party format. The PP and Ciudadanos decided to abstain from voting in Congress in the matter of the exhumation. Pedro Sánchez promised to remove Franco from the Valley and he is fulfilling it, but the proximity of the elections and the lack of consensus on what will be done with the basilica and the great cross of Cuelgamuros from now on, can leave us with a panorama of disenchantment.”²²⁹

está en España la defensa del dictador en 2019.”; Precedo, “Los tres poderes del Estado entierran sin honores al dictador Francisco Franco.”

²²⁷ Original quotation: ‘La derecha se borra de una jornada histórica e impide el consenso de Estado sobre la exhumación de Franco.’

²²⁸ Original quotation: ‘El PP y Franco: de alabar al dictador en la Fundación de AP a evitar condenar el regimen y callar ante la exhumación.’

²²⁹ Original quotation: “No podemos olvidar que aún hoy hay muchos que se ponen de perfil cuando hablamos de la dictadura. Vox es puro franquismo, la nostalgia empaquetada en formato de partido político. El PP y Ciudadanos decidieron abstenerse en el Congreso en la votación que aprobó la exhumación. Pedro Sánchez prometió sacar a Franco del Valle y lo está cumpliendo, pero la cercanía de las elecciones y la falta de consenso sobre lo que se hará a partir de ahora con la basílica y la gran cruz de Cuelgamuros, nos puede dejar un panorama de desencanto.”; Lafuente, “Franco estaba muerto pero muy mal enterrado.”

In this quote, Vox is presented as the endurance of Francoism, while in the case of the PP and Ciudadanos, their silence is emphasized, thereby showing that their political strategies are made up of the continuation of the silence that surrounded the democratic transition. It further shows how the PSOE is not idealized in this context (like in *El País*) but that the focus is placed on the exhumation itself. In other words, *eldiario.es* promotes the exhumation more than it promotes the PSOE. This is further shown when Sáenz de Ugarte describes the exhumation and concludes: “To consider what happened as a complete success of historical memory would be too optimistic. Nothing is known about what will be done with the sinister architectural monster that is the Valley of the Fallen . . .”²³⁰ Rather than commenting the PSOE on the exhumation, Sáenz de Ugarte places the focus on the importance of the recovering historical memory.

This importance is emphasized in a column published on October 22, 2019, when Carlos Elordi writes: “The argument that the Right often uses to reject any initiative to recover the memory of those defeated in the civil war and of the victims of Francoism is that this “reopens wounds.” This is completely false. Because those wounds are still open.”²³¹ The quote not only underlines the continuous suffering of victims or their relatives but also criticizes rightist parties in their desire to ‘forget’ the past. The Right is thereby framed as endorsing the continuation of this suffering by not helping to recover this historical memory. Here, the critical approach towards rightist parties appears again as they are framed to be nostalgic for Francoism and supportive of practices of silence. In his description of the exhumation on the day of the event, Sáenz de Ugarte argues: “The nervousness of the PP when Francoism is mentioned is not new. They were always opposed to moving the dictator from Cuelgamuros. To justify it, they claimed that they did not want to “reopen old wounds,” as if the thousands of people who did not know where their family members, shot by Franco, were buried, had to resign.”²³² Sáenz de Ugarte undermines this argument of reopening wounds, by stating that it is used as a justification for Francoism and countering it by

²³⁰ Original quotation: “Considerar lo ocurrido como un éxito completo de la memoria histórica es demasiado optimista. Nada se sabe sobre lo que se hará con ese siniestro engendro arquitectónico que es el Valle de los Caídos. . .”; Sáenz de Ugarte, “El bicho abandona volando el mausoleo de Cuelgamuros.”

²³¹ Original quotation: “El argumento que la derecha suele esgrimir para rechazar cualquier iniciativa para la recuperación de la memoria de los derrotados en la Guerra Civil y de las víctimas del franquismo es que eso “reabre heridas”. Es completamente falso. Porque esas heridas siguen abiertas.”; Elordi, “Que sigan queriendo a Franco, pero sin ofender a nadie.”

²³² Original quotation: “Los nervios del PP cuando se menciona al franquismo no son una novedad. Siempre se opuso a mover al dictador de Cuelgamuros. Para justificarlo, alegaba que no quería “reabrir viejas heridas”, como si a las miles de personas que no sabían dónde están enterrados sus familiares fusilados por el franquismo estuvieran obligadas a resignarse.”; Sáenz de Ugarte, “El bicho abandona volando el mausoleo de Cuelgamuros.”

underlining the suffering of “thousands of people.” The argument that the wounds of Spaniards have never been closed, is thereby emphasized across multiple articles and columns. For example, Elordi further writes in his column: “What happened in the war continues to divide the country and the coexistence between Spaniards continues to be based on talking as little as possible about these matters with those who do not share their feelings.”²³³ He thereby strengthens the narrative that Spaniards continue to be divided and to suffer because of Francoism. The immorality of rightist parties is thereby strongly implied by continuously describing their desire to stop the recovery of historical memory, while so many people are still wounded.

In their discussion regarding electoralist practices related to the exhumation, both *El País* and *El Mundo* place their focus on the actions of the PSOE. Where *El País* defends and even encourages the PSOE’s attempted mobilization of leftist voters, *El Mundo* condemns this practice and uses it to argue for a declining level of democracy in the country. *Eldiario.es*, on the other hand, does not place its main focus on the PSOE at all, nor any other leftist party. Instead, it emphasizes rightist parties – especially the PP, Ciudadanos and Vox – and takes on a highly critical approach towards these actors. Rather than promoting or attempting to incentivize leftist votes, the newspaper focuses on discrediting the Right. It thereby does not take on a condemning approach towards the use or presence of electoralism by the political parties in the race, but does emphasize the hypocrisy of rightist parties in their accusations towards the PSOE and their insincerity regarding the exhumation. The newspaper underlines that discrediting the exhumation is a political strategy constructed by the PP, Vox and Ciudadanos to win votes rather than a sincere desire to reverse the process. Furthermore, it emphasizes the affiliation these parties have to the former dictator and feature the intertwined history of the rightist parties (especially the PP) with Francoism, thereby framing them as representative for the repressive regime and shows that their strategies regarding historical memory are based on a continuation of the silence that surrounded the democratic transition.

4.2 An incomplete democracy

Eldiario.es, more than the other investigated newspapers, emphasizes the moral righteousness of Franco’s exhumation. “What we have is the end of a national shame, and that is not a small

²³³ Original quotation: “Lo que pasó en la guerra sigue dividiendo al país y la convivencia entre españoles se sigue fundamentando en hablar lo menos posible de esos asuntos con quien no comparta tus sentimientos.”; Elordi, “Que sigan queriendo a Franco, pero sin ofender a nadie.”

accomplishment,” Sáenz de Ugarte writes on the day of the exhumation.²³⁴ Rather than focusing on the event itself, however, the newspaper critically highlights the notion that Francoism is still present in Spain’s current society. Here, this research will analyze one of the main narratives promoted in *eldiario.es* in which the exhumation is framed as a righteous but small step in a problematic democracy. It will thereby show how the newspaper emphasizes the remnants of Francoism in Spain’s current democracy and condemns the country’s ‘forgetfulness’ during previous governments.

On the day of the exhumation, *eldiario.es* published an article in which Sáenz de Ugarte starts by stating: “The government of Sánchez closes an unworthy chapter of Spanish democracy by removing Franco from the place where the state honored him for four decades.”²³⁵ Although *eldiario.es* frames the exhumation as a maturing step towards a more complete democracy, it also emphasizes how Spain’s democratic regime has been far from righteous towards the victims of Francoism. One of the ways in which this narrative is supported, critically highlights the ‘forgetfulness’ of the Spanish transition. This is, for example, shown by the headline ‘Decades of delay in historical memory condemn most families to never recover their dead,’ an article in which it is explained that many remains in mass graves can no longer be identified after all these years.²³⁶ In an article published by *eldiario.es* on October 24, 2019, Raúl Rejón and Belén Remacha describe the exhumation and emphasize the 44 years in which the dictator rested in the Valley: “Four decades in which the government has been led by coalitions of convenience such as the UCD, the PSOE – which was clandestine during the dictatorship – and the Partido Popular. All that time, the tomb in the basilica remained a place of worship and honor of the dictator, located above all those buried there, all deceased during the civil war, except him.”²³⁷ The newspaper thereby takes on a critical approach towards Spain’s transitional history by naming the “coalitions of convenience” and ascribing the immorality of Franco’s resting place in the Valley to these unions. In his column published on October 23, 2019, Lafuente describes the final days of Franco and analyzes the early period of transition:

²³⁴ Original quotation: “Lo que tenemos es el fin de una vergüenza nacional, que no es poco.”; Ibid.

²³⁵ Original quotation: “El Gobierno de Sánchez cierra un capítulo indigno de la democracia española al sacar a Franco del lugar en que el Estado llevaba cuatro décadas homenajéandolo.”; Sáenz de Ugarte, “El bicho abandona volando el mausoleo de Cuelgamuros.”

²³⁶ Original quotation: ‘Décadas de retraso en memoria histórica condenan a la mayor parte de familias a no recuperar jamás a sus muertos.’

²³⁷ Original quotation: “Cuatro décadas en las que el Gobierno ha sido dirigido por una coalición de conveniencia como la UCD, por el PSOE –que fue clandestino durante la dictadura– y el Partido Popular. La tumba en la basílica permaneció todo ese tiempo como lugar de culto y honra de la figura del dictador situada por encima de todos los enterrados allí, todos fallecidos durante la Guerra Civil, menos él.”; Rejón and Remacha, “Los restos del dictador Francisco Franco salen del Valle de los Caídos cuatro décadas después.”

“The transition brought us democracy, yes, but also a selective silence on the civil war and the dictatorship. Except for a few, there was no reparation or justice and even today we continue to fight for the dignity of the memory of those who remain forgotten in mass graves. No, it was not done well. None of the butchers and torturers paid for their crimes. . . . Franco’s political heirs cleansed their biographies and became democratic, and no one dared to ask for more explanations.”²³⁸

The critical quote is not only aimed at Spain’s recent history, but also at the current state the country is in. As Lafuente argues, the victims in mass graves remain forgotten, there has been no retributive justice and the political heirs of Franco are still active under the mask of being democratic.

Not only does *eldiario.es* criticize the governments during the transition, it also emphasizes the perpetuating presence of the dictatorship in Spain’s current society. This is shown, for example, when Sáenz de Ugarte discusses the exhumation: “Democracy has taken a long time to detach itself from the figure of Franco, more than anything because it is impossible. History haunts all peoples and always ends up catching them. . . . The intention of forgetting the past, acting as if it never existed – one of the crucial features of the Spanish Transition – is a somewhat dishonest, but above all a useless exercise.”²³⁹ By arguing that it is useless to try to forget the past because it will always be present, Sáenz de Ugarte poses a clear counterargument against claims that the exhumation ‘will reopen old wounds’ and that it ‘does not interest Spaniards,’ claims mostly made by the PP according to *eldiario.es* (this is further explained in 4.3).²⁴⁰ This narrative is again shown when journalist Raquel Exerique describes the first mass that took place in the Valley after Franco’s exhumation. She concludes her description by stating: “At the end of the first mass without Franco it rained, and the Valley was still a place built by a dictator to honor his own side. It was still the largest

²³⁸ Original quotation: ““La Transición nos trajo la democracia, sí, pero también un silencio selectivo sobre la Guerra Civil y la dictadura. Salvo para algunos pocos, no hubo reparación ni justicia y aún hoy seguimos peleando por dignificar la memoria de los que siguen olvidados en las fosas comunes. No, no se hizo bien. Ninguno de los matarifes y torturadores pagaron por sus delitos. . . . Los herederos políticos del franquismo blanquearon sus biografías y se transformaron en demócratas y nadie se atrevió a pedirles más explicaciones.”; Lafuente, “Franco estaba muerto pero muy mal enterrado.”

²³⁹ Original quotation: “La democracia ha tardado mucho en desprenderse de la figura de Franco, más que nada porque es imposible. La historia persigue a todos los pueblos y siempre termina por atraparlos. . . . La intención de olvidarse del pasado, hacer como si no hubiera existido –uno de los rasgos cruciales de la Transición española– es un ejercicio un tanto deshonesto, pero sobre todo inútil.”; Sáenz de Ugarte, “El bicho abandona volando el mausoleo de Cuelgamuros.”

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

mass grave in Spain and continued to house a Benedictine order anchored in the privileges of a 1957 decree. Everything was equally sinister but one thing was missing: the body of the architect of the dictatorship.”²⁴¹ Without devaluing the significance of the exhumation – after all, the ‘architect of the dictatorship’ was now removed – Exerique describes how the remnants of a Francoist past still surround the site of the mausoleum.

The narrative of Francoist remnants in Spain’s current society is highlighted and condemned by the newspaper. This is further shown, for example, in a column published on October 23, 2019, in which Carlos Hernández takes on a critical approach towards the exhumation and places numerous questions at the event, such as: “Why will the new grave of Franco continue to be financed by the money of the Spanish public?”²⁴² but also at the remnants of the dictatorship in Spain’s society: “Will our children someday study the real history of Spain and not a false story that softens the Franco regime?”²⁴³ He concludes his question by arguing: “Too many unanswered questions that demonstrate to what extent Spain remains a deeply abnormal country, in democratic terms.”²⁴⁴ Hernández implies that Spain continues to favor Francoist practices in its current society by mentioning that Franco’s new grave will keep being financed by public funds and that the public history regarding the dictatorship is still moderated. He thereby takes on a critical approach to the level of democracy in the country.

Here, this research has analyzed one of the main narratives presented in *eldiario.es*, which frames the exhumation as a righteous step in a democracy that remains problematic and intertwined with Francoist practices. Rather than placing an emphasis on the exhumation itself, the newspaper thereby highlights Francoist remnants in Spain’s contemporary society and condemns its delay in historical memory. This narrative is further underlined by the focus placed on the victims of the dictatorship in the newspaper.

²⁴¹ Original quotation: “A la salida de la primera misa sin Franco llovía, y el Valle seguía siendo un lugar construido por un dictador para honrar a su bando. Seguía siendo la mayor fosa común de España y continuaba alojando a una orden benedictina anclada en los privilegios de un decreto de 1957. Estaba todo igual de siniestro pero faltaba una cosa: el cuerpo del artífice de la dictadura.”; Exerique, “Día uno en el Valle después de Franco.”

²⁴² Original quotation: “¿Por qué la nueva tumba de Franco seguirá estando sufragada con el dinero de todos los españoles?”; Hernández, “Volvamos a descorchar el champán.”

²⁴³ Original quotation: “¿Estudiarán algún día nuestros niños la Historia real de España y no un relato falseado que dulcifica el régimen franquista?”; Hernández, “Volvamos a descorchar el champán.”

²⁴⁴ Original quotation: “Demasiadas preguntas sin respuesta que demuestran hasta qué punto España sigue siendo un país profundamente anormal, en términos democráticos.”; Ibid.

4.3 The villainy of Francoism and the Right

The aversion to the political Right and Francoism that is presented in *eldiario.es*, is further portrayed by the emphasis on the immorality of Franco. Unlike the other newspapers, *eldiario.es* highlights the historical crimes committed by Franco and his regime, not only through descriptions but also through a high level of interviews with surviving victims or relatives. It thereby underlines the enormous group of victims generated by the regime and frames the group of Franco supporters as small in number. In what follows, this research will analyze the narrative portrayed in *eldiario.es* in which the endurance of the suffering generated by Francoism is emphasized. The newspaper thereby continues its narrative of rightist parties as nostalgic for Francoism and argues that their desire to stop the recovery of historical memory is highly immoral.

From the narrative that highlights the existence of Francoist remnants in Spain's society, flows the emphasis on the crimes of the Franco regime and how these continue to generate suffering. One of the plotlines by which *eldiario.es* presents this narrative, focuses on the history of Franco's crimes as head of state. As Carlos Hernández describes in his column, published on October 23, 2019, in a response to the supporters of Franco: "The weapons of these deniers, these defenders of abnormality, are ignorance and lies. So the best answer is always . . . to repeat the data, to tell the truth and remember who Francisco Franco was."²⁴⁵ He goes on to describe Franco as "the author of an ideological genocide," "a fascist who filled Spain with swastikas," "a "Caudillo" who kidnapped our liberties for 40 years, made tens of thousands of men slave workers and tortured and imprisoned tens of thousands of people for their political ideas," and other descriptions of the sort.²⁴⁶ By using this terminology Hernández endorses a highly criminal image of Franco and thereby underlines the severity of ignoring such crimes. This is further shown when *eldiario.es* publishes an article describing in detail executions that took place in the city of Complutense after the civil war and emphasizing the crimes of Francoism. Journalist Juan Miguel Baquero states: "The dead were housewives, laborers, a chaplain, teachers, bricklayers, soldiers, doctors, shoemakers, photographers, a pastor... They responded to names like Julia, Manuel or

²⁴⁵ Original quotation: "Las armas de estos negacionistas, de estos defensores de la anormalidad son la ignorancia y la mentira. Por eso siempre . . . la mejor respuesta pasa por repetir los datos, por contar la verdad y recordar quién fue Francisco Franco."; Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Original quotation: "El autor de un genocidio ideológico," "Un fascista que llenó España de esvásticas," "Un "Caudillo" que secuestró nuestras libertades durante 40 años, convirtió en trabajadores esclavos a decenas de miles de hombres y torturó y encarceló a decenas de miles de personas por sus ideas políticas."; Ibid.

Pablo.”²⁴⁷ Through this description of innocent, day-to-day people Baquero highlights the inhumanity of Franco’s crimes and gives the victims a name people can relate to. Here, Franco’s villainy is underlined by a focus on the victims.

This is especially shown by the high level of coverage the newspaper gives to interviews with surviving victims of Francoism or their relatives, which exceeds the levels of representation in *El País* and *El Mundo*. Headlines such as ‘The victims of the dictatorship, on the day of the exhumation of Franco: “The terrible thing is that many are not able to see this historic day”,’²⁴⁸ ‘Francisca’s fight to recover the father that Francoism took from her twice’²⁴⁹ and ‘Republican women in exile: the silenced history of the feminist struggle and anti-Francoism’²⁵⁰ appear numerous in *eldiario.es* during the investigated time frame, showing the focus on the victims. These articles all included detailed descriptions of suffering caused by the dictatorship and were accompanied by columns underlining these narratives of injustice.

Supportive of this framework is the negative image *eldiario.es* presents concerning the Franco family. When Sáenz de Ugarte describes the exhumation, he portrays Franco’s oldest grandson, Francis Franco, in his article: “Francis Franco is dedicated to managing the family fortune, although he was never part of the intelligent branch of the family, if that even exists.”²⁵¹ The comment gives the impression of ridiculing the family, which is underlined when later in the article, Sáenz de Ugarte describes the arrival of Antonio Tejero at the cemetery of Mingorrubio “in a sort of Franco outfit, making him even more ridiculous.”²⁵² *Eldiario.es* thereby seems to ascribe the family much less gravitas than *El País* or *El Mundo*. This is supported by how the newspaper presents the Franco supporters, not only in a discrediting way but also as very low in number. In their description of the exhumation, journalists Ignacio Escolar and Raquel Ejerique describe the presence of Franco supporters at the cemetery of Mingorrubio: “The mobilization in support of the dictator was a big failure. During the trip to Cuelgamuros, Franco was accompanied by more than a hundred thousand

²⁴⁷ Original quotation: “Los muertos eran amas de casa, jornaleros, un capellán, maestros, albañiles, militares, médicos, zapateros, fotógrafos, un pastor... Respondían a nombres como Julia, Manuel o Pablo.”; Baquero, “Los fusilados de Alcalá de Henares.”

²⁴⁸ Original quotation: ‘Las víctimas de la dictadura, sobre la exhumación de Franco: “Lo terrible es que muchos no hayan podido ver este día histórico”.’

²⁴⁹ Original quotation: ‘La lucha de Francisca por recuperar al padre que el franquismo le arrebató dos veces.’

²⁵⁰ Original quotation: ‘Mujeres del exilio republicano: la historia silenciada de la lucha feminista y el antifranquismo.’

²⁵¹ Original quotation: “Francis Franco se dedica a gestionar la fortuna familiar, aunque nunca formó parte de la rama inteligente de la familia, en el caso de que esta exista.”; Sáenz de Ugarte, “El bicho abandona volando el mausoleo de Cuelgamuros.”

²⁵² Original quotation: “en una especie de sosias de Franco, lo que le hace aun más ridículo.”; Ibid.

people who attended the funeral. The return, 44 years later, did not gather a crowd remotely similar. At the peak of the crowd, the fascist demonstration barely held 500 people, a number similar to that of the journalists assigned to cover the exhumation.”²⁵³ The emphasis is thereby placed on the low number of “fascist” supporters. Belén Remacha underlines this narrative in her article concerning the exhumation: “The day has made clear that the most ultra-Francoist groups do not manage to gather more than a couple of hundred people.”²⁵⁴ By highlighting not only the small amount of Franco supporters, but also the high number of victims, *eldiario.es* further emphasizes the injustice of Francoist remnants in Spain.

Here, this research has shown that *eldiario.es* emphasizes the continuous suffering of victims generated by Francoism. By featuring Franco’s historical crimes, the newspaper not only underlines their severity but also undermines the rightist claim that recovering historical memory would ‘reopen old wounds.’ Counterarguments to this claim are mentioned across multiple articles, and endorsed by the focus *eldiario.es* places on the “thousands” of victims. There are notions of inequity and injustice, endorsed by a comparison between the small amount of Franco supporters and the high level of victims described in the newspaper.

4.4 Conclusion

The general framework presented by *eldiario.es* gives a highly critical impression of rightist parties and argues that Spain has seen a continuation of Francoist practices. In this framework, the described narratives closely relate to each other. The newspaper thereby confirms practices of electoralism and ascribes these not only to the PSOE, but to rightist parties as well. It takes on a critical approach especially towards the PP, Vox and Ciudadanos and frames these parties as nostalgic for Francoism, by emphasizing that they oppose a “milestone for democracy” and that they have not condemned civilians’ exaltations to the former dictator. Furthermore, the newspaper zooms in on the history of the PP with Francoism, thereby endorsing the image that these are intertwined. Unlike *El País* however, *eldiario.es* does not take on the electoralist practices to promote the PSOE, but rather to underline their critique of the Right. The newspaper highlights the hypocrisy of rightist parties

²⁵³ Original quotation: “La movilización en apoyo al dictador fue un gran fracaso. El viaje de ida a Cuelgamuros, Franco lo hizo acompañado por más de cien mil personas que acudieron al funeral. La vuelta, 44 años después, no congregó a una multitud ni lejanamente similar. En el momento de máxima afluencia, la manifestación fascista apenas sumó 500 personas, una cifra similar a la de periodistas acreditados para cubrir la exhumación.”; Escolar and Ejerique, “La intrahistoria de la exhumación de Franco.”

²⁵⁴ Original quotation: “La jornada ha dejado claro que los grupos franquistas más ultra no llegan a reunir a más de un par de centenares de personas.”; Remacha, “El Segundo entierro de Franco remueve en El Pardo los últimos restos del franquismo más ultra.”

in their accusations towards Sánchez by framing their opposition to the exhumation as a political strategy for electoral gain, thereby emphasizing their insincerity towards their voters. Their critical approach towards the Right is further underlined in the narrative *eldiario.es* presents in which the exhumation is seen as a righteous step in a problematic democracy. Hereby, they highlight Francoist remnants in Spain's society and take on a highly critical approach towards the pact of forgetting in Spain's transition and the delays in historical memory. The immorality of these practices is emphasized in a way that exceeds the other investigated newspapers, and furthered by the focus placed on Franco's historical crimes and the victims he generated who continue to suffer. Across multiple articles *eldiario.es* thereby discusses the argument that recovering historical memory would 'reopen old wounds,' an argument that they ascribe to rightist parties and strongly counter through an emphasis on Franco's crimes and a high level of interviews conducted with victims or their surviving relatives. The newspaper thereby stresses the inequity and injustice of the situation by portraying the number of victims as tens of thousands, while the Franco supporters are presented as a small group barely exceeding the number of journalists at the exhumation. The gravitas of the Franco camp is further undermined by *eldiario.es* through mocking descriptions of Franco's oldest grandson and one of his most public supporters, an approach not shared by *El País* – who frames the family as the confrontational adversary of the government – or *El Mundo* – who attempts to transfer feelings of sympathy regarding the family – who both place a larger focus on the family as significant actor in the process of the exhumation.

Chapter 5.

Analysis: Narratives in *El Mundo*

After *El País*, *El Mundo* is considered the largest daily national newspaper in Spain and distributes 68.813 copies in 2020.²⁵⁵ Its online edition is one of the market leaders in the country, with more than 9 million independent users per month.²⁵⁶ First published in 1989, the newspaper “expresses the mainstream views of the Spanish right with independent and liberal overtones.”²⁵⁷ The company of the newspaper belongs to the Italian group RCS Rizzoli.²⁵⁸ *El Mundo* is viewed as a newspaper with an “opinión explícita,” an explicit opinion, which features a high level of columns.²⁵⁹ It also takes on a political stance, which is generally described as “a conservative and traditional approach.”²⁶⁰

El Mundo forms the last newspaper to be analyzed in the context of this research. Its influence is confirmed by the fact that it is one of “the most read traditional mainstream newspapers” in the country, together with *El País*.²⁶¹ This shows that the narratives presented in *El Mundo* reach a high level of newsreaders in Spain, and therefore play a significant role in the formation of memory frameworks in public discourse. In order to analyze the narratives promoted with regards to Franco and his exhumation, the research focus is again placed on the two weeks leading up to the event and the two weeks that followed. It has thereby found that *El Mundo* mainly emphasizes (i) the instrumentalization of the exhumation, by which is meant the usage of the event for political gain; (ii) the apathy of the government during the process, which stresses a level of uncooperativeness and insensitivity; and (iii) sympathetic feelings towards the Franco family, who is cast in a much more positive way than in the other analyzed newspapers. The newspaper has presented a narrative in which the government of the PSOE is condemned in its execution of the process, rather than the exhumation itself. It thereby places an emphasis on the political manipulation of the PSOE, but not on the significance of the exhumation for historical memory in the country.

²⁵⁵ Cano, “OJD: El País cae por debajo de los 100.000 ejemplares y ABC supera a El Mundo en ventas.”; Galluzzi, *Libraries and Public Perception*, 28.

²⁵⁶ *El País*. “EL PAÍS, el periódico digital en español más leído del mundo.”

²⁵⁷ Galluzzi, *Libraries and Public Perception*, 28.

²⁵⁸ García Avilés et al., “Newsroom Integration in Austria, Spain and Germany,” 290.

²⁵⁹ Canel, “*El País*, *ABC* y *El Mundo*,” 4.

²⁶⁰ Galluzzi, *Libraries and Public Perception*, 58; Mancinas-Chávez, Moreno-Cabezudo and Ruiz-Alba, “Leadership of the native digital press versus the mainstream press in Spain,” 1434.

²⁶¹ Mancinas-Chávez, Moreno-Cabezudo and Ruiz-Alba, “Leadership of the native digital press versus the mainstream press in Spain,” 1436.

5.1 *The instrumentalization of the exhumation*

As described in previous chapters, the exhumation of Francisco Franco was initiated by the current Spanish government and took place nearly two weeks before the national elections in the country. While not denying the event should take place, *El Mundo* has placed an emphasis on this timing in its articles discussing the process, and presents Franco's exhumation as an electoral weapon. In what follows, this research will analyze this narrative as presented by the newspaper. It will thereby describe how the exhumation is framed as consciously designed by the PSOE to gain more votes, as well as the focus that is placed on the manipulation by the party rather than on the significance itself.

Although it becomes clear that the newspaper casts a much more positive light on the memory of Franco than *El País* or *eldiario.es*, it does not deny that the exhumation should take place. Multiple articles reveal connotations that share this framework brought to the foreground by *El País* and *eldiario.es*, in which the resting place of Franco in the Valley is not righteous. This is shown, for example, in an article published on October 24, 2019, describing the process of the exhumation. The article concludes by recounting the speech made by Ramón Tejero, the son of Antonio Tejero – who was convicted for the attempts of a coup d'état in 1978 and 1981 – in which he idealized Franco as, among other titles, “un humilde servidor de Cristo Redentor,” a humble servant of Christ the Redeemer. Journalist Marisa Cruz comments on this speech by stating: “Words and words, from another time . . . to hide 40 years of repression, abuse and death. A homily with Falangist remnants filled with “stars”, “homelands”, “resurrections” and “sacrifice”, on the margin of real history. . . . Meanwhile, in Spain, life goes by on another wave. That of freedom.”²⁶² This quote counters the idealized narrative of the Franco supporter and shows that *El Mundo* does not object the view that Franco's remains should not rest in the Valley of the Fallen.

The significance of the exhumation, however, is downplayed by the newspaper through the continuous focus on the political manipulation by the PSOE, through which the event is framed as merely a political play rather than the final step towards democratic legitimization, as it was described in *El País*. On October 11, 2019, the newspaper publishes an article with the headline ‘The government will exhume Francisco Franco before October 25,

²⁶² Original quotation: “Palabras y palabras, de otro tiempo . . . para ocultar 40 años de represión, abusos y muerte. Una homilía con resabios falangistas cuajada de “luceros”, “patrias”, “resurrecciones” y “sacrificio”, al margen de la historia real. . . . Mientras, en España, la vida transcurre en otra onda. La de la libertad.”; Cruz, “El último parte: Francisco Franco abandona el Valle de los Caídos.”

in the middle of the electoral campaign.²⁶³ The headline emphasizes that the event will take place in the midst of political campaigns. This, in turn, already implies that the exhumation is used for electoral purposes. Later in the article, journalist Marisol Hernández argues more clearly:

“The decision to exhume Franco will almost take place in an electoral campaign. Although it does not officially begin until November 1, all the parties and especially Sánchez are immersed in a long pre-campaign. Calvo has defended that they have not chosen the moment, because their desire was to do it much earlier. But the truth is that the government could do it after 10-N.²⁶⁴ Socialists think that the transfer of Franco’s remains contributes to the mobilization of their electorate.”²⁶⁵

The quote illustrates the narrative *El Mundo* promotes in which the exhumation is used to gain political prominence by Spain’s current government. By quoting vice-president Carmen Calvo, stating that the exhumation ‘in truth’ could have happened after the election, and that “especialmente Sánchez” has been engaged in political campaigning, Hernández implies that the exhumation is not only used to gain votes, but that the date of the event is also consciously chosen by the government for this purpose. This implication is further underlined when she argues that socialist parties believe that Franco’s exhumation will strengthen their electoral mobilization. Moreover, by phrasing the intention of the government to exhume Franco “much earlier” as merely a “desire,” Hernández not only downplays the credibility of their intentions but also neglects the fact that the decision for the exhumation was made in the summer of 2018 and postponed due to legal struggles between the Spanish government and the Franco family.

Accusations of electoralism are strongly expressed by the newspaper, by a high level of articles expressing such allegations and through descriptions of the exhumation as “an electoral propaganda show.”²⁶⁶ In an article published by the editorial office of *El Mundo*, this

²⁶³ Original quotation: ‘El Gobierno exhumará a Francisco Franco antes del 25 de octubre, en plena precampaña electoral.’

²⁶⁴ 10-N refers to November 10, 2019, the day on which the national elections took place.

²⁶⁵ Original quotation: “La decisión de exhumar a Franco se producirá casi en campaña electoral. Aunque oficialmente no comienza hasta el 1 de noviembre, todos los partidos y especialmente Sánchez están inmersos en una larga precampaña. Calvo ha defendido que ellos no han escogido el momento porque su deseo era hacerlo mucho antes. Pero lo cierto es que el Gobierno podría hacerlo después del 10-N. Los socialistas piensan que el traslado de los restos de Franco contribuye a la movilización de su electorado.”; Hernández, “El Gobierno exhumará a Francisco Franco antes del 25 de octubre, en plena precampaña electoral.”

²⁶⁶ Original quotation: “Un espectáculo de propaganda electoral.”; *El Mundo*, “Una exhumación electoralista.”

narrative is furthered: “Sánchez, who announced more reburials yesterday during an opportunistic appearance, uses Franco’s exhumation to avoid the problems that really worry the Spanish, such as the separatist challenge or the economic slowdown, before 10-N. Sánchez’s effort to reactivate Franco’s reburial has thereby prevented consensus. . .”²⁶⁷ Here, *El Mundo* portrays Sánchez as using historical memory for his own political gain. Furthermore, they downplay the significance of the event by describing that Franco’s remains in the Valley do not belong to the problems that *really* worry the Spanish public.

The emphasis on an electoral narrative continues to be placed on the PSOE and their socialist supporters, shown by the introduction of an article on October 24, 2019: “Spain settles an outstanding bill with 40 years of dictatorship. It does so in the midst of an electoral campaign in the hands of a functioning socialist government.”²⁶⁸ By highlighting the government in function as socialist, journalist Cruz emphasizes in her implication that it is not merely the government who made use of this exhumation, but the *socialist, leftist* government.

Accusations of electoralist practices by the PSOE are further strengthened in an article that describes the arguments of multiple political parties regarding the exhumation. These parties include the PP, Ciudadanos, Podemos, Vox and Más País, with the notable exception being the PSOE.²⁶⁹ Although the article explains some parties to be in favor of the exhumation, none of them express clear support of the PSOE. Rather, the article contains many allegations towards Sánchez and the PSOE of organizing “un show electoral,” an electoral show. In some of these cases, it remains unclear where the quote of a political figure ends and where the framework promoted by *El Mundo* begins. An example of this is shown when the journalists explain the position of Albert Rivera, head of Ciudadanos, towards the exhumation: “Officially, he supports the departure of the dictator from the Valley of the Fallen but, at the same time, he criticizes the political and “propaganda” use of the operation by the government of Pedro Sánchez.”²⁷⁰ In this quote, the question of whether the

²⁶⁷ Original quotation: “Sánchez, quien ayer anunció más desentierros durante una oportunista comparecencia, usa la exhumación de Franco para inhumar los problemas que de verdad inquietan a los españoles, como el desafío separatista o la desaceleración económica, antes del 10-N. El empeño de Sánchez de reactivar -vía decretazo- la reinhumación de Franco impidió el consenso. . .”; Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Original quotation: “España salda una cuenta pendiente con 40 años de dictadura. Lo hace en plena campaña electoral de la mano de un Gobierno socialista en funciones.”; Cruz, “El último parte: Francisco Franco abandona el Valle de los Caídos.”

²⁶⁹ Juanma Lamet et al., ““El pasado, pasado está”, “no tocaba”, “indiferencia”, “un show electoral”, así han reaccionado los partidos a la exhumación.”

²⁷⁰ Original quotation: “Oficialmente, apoya la salida del dictador del Valle de los Caídos pero, a la vez, critica la utilización política y “propagandística” de la operación por parte del Gobierno de Pedro Sánchez.”; Ibid.

government used the exhumation for electoral purposes already seems to be confirmed, consequently to be criticized by Rivera. Later in the article, the journalists describe the position of Pablo Iglesias, head of Podemos: “Pablo Iglesias wanted to remember, on a day like this, his father and grandfather, who were in the prisons of Franco, and has persisted in his criticism of the last days towards the Pedro Sánchez government, accusing it of “electoralism”.”²⁷¹ By using this terminology, describing (the family of) Iglesias as victims of Francoism and relating this status to his criticism towards the PSOE, *El Mundo* – much like Iglesias himself – ascribes a level of gravitas to his opinion. Moreover, the notion that Iglesias mentions the suffering of his family in relation to his own political purposes is in no way indicated or underlined by *El Mundo*. Rather, the newspaper continues to confirm the use of electoralism as solely used by the PSOE.

Not only are practices of electoralism exclusively ascribed to the PSOE, they are also condemned by the newspaper. This is directly shown by a description of the exhumation published on the day of the event: “Today, Francisco Franco, held captive in a zinc coffin and unarmed, has left the Valley of the Fallen. Democracy has expired. Madrid, October 24, 2019.”²⁷² The quote frames Franco as almost a victim of the government, captivated and unarmed, thereby emphasizing a sense of villainy in the latter. Furthermore, by stating that the level of democracy has “expired,” the government’s actions, by which journalist Marisa Cruz refers to a use of electoralism, are presented not only as undemocratic but as a sign of a declining level of democratic legitimacy in the country. This notion is furthered by an article published by the editorial office condemning the electoralism accompanying the exhumation, in which they state: “Removing Franco from the Valley cannot become an instrument to delegitimize the reform process that culminated in the Constitution in 1978.”²⁷³ The newspaper thereby not only underlines the notion that electoralist practices have a delegitimizing effect on the reburial, but also, like *El País*, frames the reformation process to have successfully ended in 1978.

Here, this research has made clear that *El Mundo* openly promotes a narrative in which the exhumation is seen as a way of the PSOE to gain more votes in the elections of November

²⁷¹ Original quotation: “Pablo Iglesias ha querido recordar, en un día como éste, a su padre y su abuelo, que estuvieron en prisiones de Franco, y ha insistido en la crítica de los últimos días al Gobierno de Pedro Sánchez, acusándolo de “electoralismo”.”; Ibid.

²⁷² Original quotation: “En el día de hoy, Francisco Franco cautivo en un ataúd de zinc y desarmado, ha abandonado el Valle de los Caídos. La democracia ha vencido. Madrid, 24 de octubre de 2019.”; Cruz, “El último parte: Francisco Franco abandona el Valle de los Caídos.”

²⁷³ Original quotation: “Sacar a Franco del Valle no puede convertirse en un instrumento de deslegitimización del proceso reformista que culminó en la Constitución de 1978.”; *El Mundo*, “Una exhumación electoralista.”

2019. The newspaper thereby not only implies that the event is used for this purpose, but also that the date of the exhumation is consciously chosen to happen before the elections. The focus of electoral use is thereby placed on the PSOE, through the continuous mentioning that the exhumation is performed by a *socialist* government, the favoring of rightwing parties or arguments in articles and the relatively low level of explanations or arguments as expressed by the PSOE. In the article describing the reactions of other political parties towards the exhumation, much of the focus is placed on narratives – such as those of Ciudadanos and Podemos – that do not condemn the exhumation itself, but rather the way in which the PSOE misbehaved during the process, a narrative that is continued in the newspaper.

5.2 *The insensitivity of the government*

While newspapers *El País* and *eldiario.es* place their emphasis on the Franco family as seeking legal confrontations with the government regarding the exhumation, *El Mundo* casts an opposing light on the situation, framing Spain's government as the adversarial party. Here, this research will outline the framework drawn by *El Mundo* in which Spain's government is depicted in a negative way regarding the cooperation with other parties involved in the exhumation. It will describe how *El Mundo* emphasizes the government's lack of religious respect and its insensitivity towards other parties involved. The focus of the newspaper is thereby not placed on the argument that Franco's remains should not be exhumed, but rather on the view that the Spanish government did not handle the process correctly.

On October 10, 2019, the newspaper published an article with the headline 'The Benedictine monks ask not to exhume Franco "before reaching an agreement between the government and the family"'.²⁷⁴ When this headline is compared with the headline published by *El País* on the same day, namely 'The prior of the Valley of the Fallen defies the Supreme Court and the Vatican and says he will not allow Franco to be exhumed,' it becomes clear that the implications of these headlines differ greatly.²⁷⁵ While *El País* frames the prior of the Valley, Santiago Cantera, as contentious or uncooperative, *El Mundo* does not show this narrative at all. Instead, the newspaper emphasizes the role of the monks of the mausoleum in the process and frame them as some sort of mediators on behalf of the Franco family. Unlike the other investigated newspapers, *El Mundo* extensively explains the arguments of the

²⁷⁴ Original quotation: 'Los monjes benedictinos piden no exhumar a Franco "antes de llegar a un acuerdo entre el Gobierno y la familia".'

²⁷⁵ Junquera and Verdú, "El prior del Valle de los Caídos desafía al Supremo y al Vaticano y dice que no dejará exhumar a Franco."

Benedictine monks. It thereby places more focus on the framework drawn by the monks than *El País* or *eldiario.es*. The monks, in turn, place a negative focus on the role of the PSOE in the process of exhuming Franco. This is, for example, shown when journalist Sara Polo quotes one of the Benedictine monks after Cantera sent a letter to vice-president Carmen Calvo in which he stated he would not allow access to the mausoleum:

“This newspaper tried to speak to the prior, Santiago Cantera. However, as he was not there, another member of the community explained that “this ruling is based on a Royal Decree of August 24 last year²⁷⁶ that is typical for a banana republic, all because of *un calentón*”²⁷⁷ Pedro Sánchez.” The Benedictines added that “Felipe González himself said the other day that feelings cannot be foundations of law.”²⁷⁸

The quote makes clear that the monks connected to the Valley are given a platform by *El Mundo* to voice their political stance regarding the matter. The focus placed on the prior of the Valley and the monks connected to it, thereby emphasizes the religious symbolism of the mausoleum and the lack of religious respect performed by the government. This lack of respect is highlighted when Cantera is quoted after the monks are denied access to the mausoleum from October 22, 2019: ““The serious thing is not only that access to the monks is prevented, but that armed military and funeral workers and construction workers freely roam in a basilica, without any control, and consequently, produce desecrations and acts contrary to their own piety and worship of a basilica,” he criticizes.”²⁷⁹ The inclusion of this quote from Cantera – lacking in *El País* or *eldiario.es* – contributes to the image that the process in which the exhumation takes place is an act of desecration.

Although the newspaper does not condemn the exhumation itself, *El Mundo* does present a framework in which the actions of Spain’s government are criticized, the way in

²⁷⁶ This refers to the legislative decision to exhume Franco’s body.

²⁷⁷ Translation of ‘un calentón’: someone who has feelings of great sexual arousal.

²⁷⁸ Original quotation: Este periódico intentó hablar con el prior, Santiago Cantera. Sin embargo, como no estaba, otro miembro de la comunidad explicó que “esta sentencia se basa en un Real Decreto del 24 de agosto del año pasado que es propio de una república bananera, todo por un calentón de Pedro Sánchez”. Los benedictinos añadieron que “el propio Felipe González dijo el otro día que los sentimientos no pueden ser fundamentos de derecho.”; Polo, “Los monjes benedictinos piden no exhumar a Franco “antes de llegar a un acuerdo entre el Gobierno y la familia.”

²⁷⁹ Original quotation: ““Lo grave no es solo que se impida el acceso a los monjes, sino que en una basílica campen libremente militares armados y operarios de funerarias y constructoras, sin control alguno pudiéndose, en consecuencia, producir profanaciones y actos contrarios al culto y a la piedad propio de una Basílica”, critica.”; EFE, “El prior del Valle de los Caídos denuncia a la Delegación Gobierno y a la Guardia Civil por restringir el acceso a la basílica.”

which the process of the exhumation was handled. One narrative supporting this framework and presented by *El Mundo*, views the government as being insensitive towards the other parties involved in the process of the exhumation. This is shown in an article that describes Franco's exhumation: "Twenty-two members of his family will accompany him in his (new) and last goodbye, but no authority will offer their condolences for such a sensitive loss . . ." ²⁸⁰ The given description of the event is quite dramatic, poetic even, with Franco giving his "last goodbye" surrounded by his family. The clear villain in this quote is thereby the Spanish government who will not offer condolences. Journalist María Eugenia Yagüe concludes her article with: "Today everything is so different in form, although Spain is still divided, now in more than two halves. The Franco family had to accept, with great regret, the patriarch's new burial." ²⁸¹ The term 'patriarch' is thereby significant, as it not only refers to a male head of a family but also to biblical figures regarded as the fathers of the human race, such as Abraham or Isaac. By using this terminology to describe Franco, together with the statement that Spain is more fractured today than in previous times, Yagüe seems to idealize the dictator and his rule.

Here, *El Mundo* has presented a narrative in which they not necessarily argue against the exhumation, but rather against the way in which the process developed under the leadership of the current Spanish government. The negative portrayal of the PSOE closely relates to another narrative *El Mundo* presents, in which the Franco family is humanized.

5.3 Sympathy for the Franco family

Although *El Mundo* does not take an opposing stance towards the exhumation itself – merely the timing and the way it was handled – , the newspaper does present a narrative in which the Franco family is cast in a softer and more positive light than in the other investigated newspapers. Here, this research will analyze this narrative presented in *El Mundo*. It will thereby describe how the newspaper presents a distinction between Franco as a dictator and as a grandfather, emphasizing the image of the latter. This narrative and the portrayal of the government as apathetic are two sides of the same coin, and both endorse the general framework of the newspaper in which the leftist government is critically approached.

²⁸⁰ Original quotation: "Veintidós miembros de su familia le acompañarán en su (nuevo) y último adiós, pero ninguna autoridad les dará el pésame por tan sensible pérdida. . ."; Yagüe, "Gritos de "traidor" a Don Juan Carlos."

²⁸¹ Original quotation: "Todo es hoy tan distinto en las formas, aunque España sigue dividida, ahora en más de dos mitades. La familia Franco ha tenido que aceptar, muy a pesar, el nuevo entierro del patriarca."; Ibid.

The notion of *El Mundo* casting the Franco family in a more positive light than the other analyzed newspapers comes to the foreground with headlines such as ‘The Franco’s ask the government to stop the exhumation until the TC²⁸² rules on its protection.’²⁸³ The terminology used here portrays the family as much less confrontational than was the case in the other newspapers. *El País*, for example, published an article regarding the matter with the headline ‘The Franco’s threaten the Constitutional Court with turning to Europe if they don’t pronounce within 24 hours.’²⁸⁴ Although the newspapers describe the Franco family in different contexts – *El Mundo* with regards to the government and *El País* to the Constitutional Court – the sentiments these headlines imply differ greatly. Where the headline published by *El País* frames the family as confrontational, *El Mundo* describes the Franco’s as much more uncontentious. Moreover, by using terminology in which the government seems to continue the exhumation without the final ruling of the Constitutional Court, *El Mundo* counters the sense of righteousness of the government which is clearly displayed in *El País*.

Not only does the newspaper frame Spain’s government as belligerent, it also implies feelings of sympathy for the Franco family. This is shown, for example, in the headline ‘The Franco’s will not be able to celebrate, for the first time, the funeral of their grandfather this 20N.’²⁸⁵ 20N thereby refers to November 20, an important day in the historical memory of the Franco family and their supporters, for it marks the death of both Francisco Franco (1975) and José Antonio Primo de Rivera (1936).²⁸⁶ In the article, journalist Beatriz Miranda describes how San Francisco de Borja, a Catholic church in Madrid, will not host the celebration of Franco’s death this year – as opposed to previous years – due to “motivos políticos,” political reasons.²⁸⁷ Miranda thereby defends the Franco family in their celebration: “It must be emphasized that the mass is in honor of the personal figure of their relative, not because of the policy of the former dictator and head of the Spanish state.”²⁸⁸ Here, she makes a clear distinction between Franco as the former head of state and as a person, and places the focus on the latter. This is also emphasized in the headline of the article, where Franco is described as ‘grandfather’ rather than ‘dictator’. The celebration is thereby framed not as a tribute to a

²⁸² TC refers to ‘Tribunal Constitucional,’ the Constitutional Court.

²⁸³ Original quotation: ‘Los Franco piden al Gobierno que paralice la exhumación hasta que el TC se pronuncie sobre su amparo.’

²⁸⁴ Casqueiro, “Los Franco amenazan al Constitucional con recurrir a Europa si no se pronuncian en 24 horas.”

²⁸⁵ Original quotation: ‘Los Franco no podrán celebrar, por primera vez, el funeral por su abuelo este 20N.’

²⁸⁶ José Antonio Primo de Rivera was the founder of Franco’s ruling party, the Falange, and became more famous after his death as a ‘martyr’ of the Civil War. His body resides near the place Franco’s body was placed in the Valley of the Fallen.; Bannister, “José Antonio Primo de Rivera: Catholic Fascism,” 91.

²⁸⁷ Miranda, “Los Franco no podrán celebrar, por primera vez, el funeral por su abuelo este 20N.”

²⁸⁸ Original quotation: “Hay que incidir que la misa es en honor de la figura personal de su familiar, no por la política del que fuera dictador y jefe del Estado español.”; Ibid.

former dictator, but as a family remembering their grandfather. An attempt to transfer feelings of sympathy towards the family becomes clear when Miranda describes them as having no possibility to celebrate his death, even though the article does not make clear why his passing cannot be remembered somewhere else.

The positive light *El Mundo* shines on the Franco family is further underlined when the newspaper publishes an article on the day of the exhumation in which journalist Miranda places the spotlight on the Franco family: “Franco’s grandchildren and great-grandchildren have shown family unity during the dictator’s exhumation.”²⁸⁹ She goes on to describe the life of two members of the Franco family, José Cristóbal Martínez-Bordiú (the second grandson of Franco) and María del Mar (‘Merry’) Martínez-Bordiú (the third granddaughter),²⁹⁰ portraying them in ways that attempt to evoke feelings of sympathy:

“José Cristóbal Martínez-Bordiú (fifth grandchild) is 61 years old and was the only one who made a military career like his grandfather, which he later abandoned (he became an infantry lieutenant in 1979) after a tragic episode in 1981. . . . He was married from 1984 to 2017 to the model and hostess Jose Toledo, whom he met in the Canary islands. With her he had two beautiful children, Daniel and Diego. . . Daniel, his eldest son, had a very serious motorcycle accident on the Arroyomolinos estate that Franco bought from the Count of Romamones. When he recovered, he went to live with his grandmother on his father’s side in the family home of Hermanos Bécquer. He nursed her until her death.”²⁹¹

Regarding granddaughter Merry Martínez-Bordiú, featured in newspapers *El País* and *eldiario.es* for her verbal assault on the representatives of Spain’s government on the day of the exhumation, Miranda writes: “With regard to Merry, she has disappeared from the map for many years, but it must be remembered that in her day she gave many exclusives to

²⁸⁹ Original quotation: “Los nietos y bisnietos de Franco han hecho alarde de unidad familiar en la exhumación del dictador.”; Miranda, “Cristóbal y Merry, los únicos familiares que han podido ver a Franco en su exhumación.”

²⁹⁰ Galaz, “Who is who in the family of former dictator Francisco Franco.”

²⁹¹ Original quotation: “José Cristóbal Martínez-Bordiú (quinto nieto) tiene 61 años y fue el único que hizo carrera militar como el abuelo, que luego abandonó (llegó a teniente de infantería en 1979) después de un trágico episodio ocurrido en 1981. . . . Estuvo casado de 1984 a 2017 con la modelo y presentadora Jose Toledo, a la que conoció en Canarias. Con ella tuvo dos guapísimos hijos, Daniel y Diego. . . Daniel, su primogénito, tuvo un gravísimo accidente de moto trial en la finca de Arroyomolinos que compró Franco al conde de Romanones. Al recuperarse, se marchó a vivir con su abuela paterna a la casa familiar de Hermanos Bécquer. La cuidó hasta su muerte.”; Miranda, “Cristóbal y Merry, los únicos familiares que han podido ver a Franco en su exhumación.”

magazines, so it was difficult for her to escape a fame that she also worked for.”²⁹² The descriptions Miranda gives portray Franco’s grandchildren not only in a positive way, but also in a way that supports sympathetic feelings towards these public figures by, for example, describing Cristóbal’s family as having “two beautiful children,” and mentioning the fact that the eldest son had a very serious accident, after which he nursed his grandmother.

The sympathetic feelings *El Mundo* evokes towards the Franco family are endorsed by the framework the newspaper presents in which the former dictator still has many supporters. On October 11, 2019, the last day people could visit Franco’s grave in the Valley of the Fallen, *El Mundo* published an article headlined “‘Where is Spain? Because it has abandoned us’: This is how they say goodbye to Franco in the Valley of the Fallen.”²⁹³ The newspaper thereby emphasizes the grief people feel regarding the exhumation. Journalist Pablo Herraiz continues after an interview with two visitors: “In general, gestures are remorseful, there are those who cry despite not being just 30 years old, and therefore having lived only in democracy.”²⁹⁴ By using terminology such as ‘in general,’ Herraiz implies that all visitors felt this way, while not providing other interviews of visitors to the grave.

Here, this research has shown that *El Mundo* describes the Franco family in a much more positive way than the other investigated newspapers. The Spanish government is thereby framed as the adversarial party who is not willing to accommodate a family mourning their grandfather. Furthermore, *El Mundo* defends the distinction between Franco as head of state and Franco as head of his family and places their emphasis on the latter, often using the term ‘grandfather.’

5.4 Conclusion

El Mundo has, during the analyzed time frame, sketched a framework in which the PSOE is negatively presented. All of the described narratives have played a contributive part in endorsing this image. First and foremost was the narrative that the exhumation was instrumentalized by the PSOE in order to gain electoral votes, a view that was repeated across multiple articles. For instance, journalist Marisol Hernández thereby not only implied that the

²⁹² Original quotation: “Con respecto a Merry, lleva muchos años desaparecida del mapa, pero hay que recordar que en su día dio muchas exclusivas a las revistas, por eso le costó escapar de una fama que ella se trabajó también por su parte.”; Ibid.

²⁹³ Original quotation: “‘¿Dónde está España? Porque nos ha abandonado’: así se despiden de Franco en el Valle de los Caídos,”

²⁹⁴ Original quotation: “En general, los gestos son compungidos, los hay que lloran pese a no tener apenas 30 años, y por tanto no haber vivido más que en la democracia.”; Herraiz, “‘¿Dónde está España? Porque nos ha abandonado.”

event was used for this purpose, but also that the timing of executing the exhumation was consciously chosen by the “socialists” to mobilize voters rather than postponing it until after the elections. This notion was further endorsed by the low level of attention given in the newspaper to explanations by the PSOE and the relatively high level of comments from opposing political parties. While critics such as Albert Rivera (Ciudadanos) and Pablo Iglesias (Podemos) are explicitly quoted or paraphrased in their reactions to the exhumation, Sánchez (PSOE) is mostly left out. *El Mundo* thereby continues to emphasize the ‘electoralism’ as solely performed by the PSOE, while not recognizing ways in which other parties make use of the exhumation to distribute their political views. The image of instrumentalization, of using the exhumation for electoral gain, is endorsed and closely related to the narrative of an insensitive government. *El Mundo* thereby takes on a perspective in which the exhumation in itself is not necessarily condemned, but the process in which it developed under the leadership of the Spanish government (i.e. the PSOE). Furthermore, the government’s lack of respect or sensitivity is endorsed by the narrative in which the Franco family is cast in a positive light, designed to evoke sympathetic feelings. By making a distinction between Franco as the head of state and Franco as head of the family, and idealizing the latter through terminology such as ‘grandfather’ and ‘patriarch’, *El Mundo* draws the image of a family grieving the death of their grandfather. This image, in turn, is endorsed by descriptions of an unsupportive government who takes needlessly extreme measures against the family in mourning.

All of the analyzed narratives have played a supporting role in the general framework portrayed by *El Mundo*, which presented a problematic approach of the PSOE towards the exhumation. Especially through the emphasis on the instrumentalist use of the exhumation by the party, the newspaper presents memory frameworks regarding Franco as playing a highly significant role in Spain’s political development. In other words, Franco’s memory, according to the narratives *El Mundo* describes, is used to influence the political development in the country, in this case through the election. The newspaper thereby shows that these narratives regarding Franco do not only affect a division among political parties, but also among the Spanish public: “. . . Spain is still divided, now in more than two halves.”²⁹⁵

²⁹⁵ Original quotation: “. . . España sigue dividida, ahora en más de dos mitades.”; Yagüe, “Gritos de “traidor” a Don Juan Carlos.”

Chapter 6.

Conclusion

After analyzing the historical memory frameworks of the Spanish Civil War and Franco's regime represented in both academic and public debate, this research will now answer the main question on how Spanish memory frameworks of Spain's Francoist past were expressed in public debates around Franco's exhumation and how they reflected Spain's growing political divide. It will thereby first take on the sub-questions – as explained in Chapter 1 – to enable this research in answering the main research question.

6.1 Main collective frameworks regarding Francoism

The development of memory frameworks in Spain regarding Francoism has been less than consentient, as the analysis of literature has shown. Here, this research will summarize the main collective memory frameworks regarding Francoism and the Spanish Transition represented in academic literature.

Since the emergence of Franco's rule, historical memory frameworks have played a large role in legitimizing the regime and its policies. These frameworks were thereby applied, especially during the first two decades of the dictatorship, to the Spanish Civil War, as well as to the government of Franco and their actions. During the early years of Franco's regime, the civil war was framed as an act of salvation from Franco in which he united the country that had suffered under the separatism of the Second Republic. His government thereby strongly imposed a narrative of religious and national unity. During the 1960s, however, the Spanish public became more focused on the future and the economic progress it promised, leaving Franco's regime to adjust their memory framework to a narrative of peace and prosperity. Franco's leadership was thereby legitimized due to its 'successful' national management. As his regime neared its ending, amnesia came gradually to be seen as the best solution for Spain, leading to an understanding of the civil war as a national tragedy for which each side was equally responsible. This narrative of equal responsibility was closely related to policies of amnesty and amnesia, and made possible the agreement of silence that lasted for more than 25 years after Franco's death. This pact of silence, in turn, endorsed the notion of equal responsibility. Around the turn of the century, accompanying the memory boom that swept through Europe, this silence was starting to break as historical research had shown that Franco's forces had been not only the main instigators of the war, they had also generated the

most victims. Furthermore, efforts in recovering historical memory started to be undertaken by social movements, clearly displaying the brutality of Francoist violence.

The main historical memory frameworks displayed in academic literature have thereby explained the civil war as an act of salvation to unify Spain, as a way of achieving economic progress and peace, as a national tragedy for which both sides shared equal blame, and as an act of Nationalist repression and violence.

6.2 The mobilization of frameworks in the exhumation

Not surprisingly, historical memory frameworks regarding Francoism and the transition feature heavily in public discussions surrounding the exhumation and are steadily called upon by the newspapers to illustrate their point or formulate political implications. Here, this research will show how historical memory frameworks are mobilized by the investigated newspapers in their representations of the exhumation. It will thereby explain how these frameworks are called upon to discredit or commend political actors and their decisions.

El País takes on a supportive role towards the exhumation and its initiator, the PSOE. Although it becomes clear that the newspaper frames Franco as a repressive dictator, its emphasis is placed on the political aspects of the event rather than on historical memory. Through a high level of articles discussing or defending electoralist practices and promoting leftist sentiments, *El País* seems to reduce the significance of the event to a political contest. This is, for example, shown when journalist Gross frames the exhumation as being “an event that the PSOE will make part of heritage on the Left.”²⁹⁶ The promotion of the PSOE and the political significance of the event are furthered by an emphasis on the exhumation as a ‘victory’ for democracy, by which the newspaper presents the exhumation as resulting in a rising level of legitimacy of Spain’s democratic regime. Furthermore, it underlines the view that the exhumation represents a closure of Franco’s ‘chapter’ in the country and the ending of his repressive presence, thereby not only emphasizing the event as a political victory but also neglecting the victims (or their relatives) who continue to suffer from its fallouts, such as those who must keep searching for the remains of family members buried in the Valley (or in mass graves across the country). Moreover, as journalist Grandes argues, the exhumation is important *because* of the nearing elections. The promotion of a rise in leftist votes thereby surpasses a promotion of reconciliation or a recovery of historical memory. Such sentiments are continued in their representation of the Franco family, which, again, mainly focuses on

²⁹⁶ Original quotation: “activo que en la izquierda patrimonializará el PSOE.”; Gross, “Franco en campaña.”

their position towards the government rather than toward surviving victims. In an interview with Franco's grandson Francis, journalist Casqueiro presents the immorality of Franco's place of tribute in the Valley as resulting from the presence of a democratic society and from a supportive parliamentary majority and judiciary, rather than as resulting from a continuous suffering of the relatives of those buried in the Valley.

Eldiario.es, on the contrary, places a larger focus on the moral significance of the exhumation, rather than on the political value. Unlike *El País*, they do not express support for a particular political party, although they clearly take on leftist sentiments. The narratives they present are marked by strong criticism towards the Right. Where *El País* transfers a narrative in which the PSOE is – in a positive way – framed as breaking the political consensus of silence in the country, *eldiario.es* underlines how rightist parties prevent such a consensus by opposing the event. The difference in this terminology leads to the notion that *eldiario.es* ascribes a higher level of normality towards the exhumation, rather than a sense of exceptionalness initiated by the PSOE. In other words, *eldiario.es* represents the exhumation as an event that should have happened years ago, rather than as an exceptional accomplishment of the government. Furthermore, the online newspaper stresses that the exhumation does not show the closure of Francoism, as is emphasized in *El País*, by framing that it would be too optimistic to consider the event as “a complete success of historical memory,” describing how Francoist remnants continue to surround the Valley after the event, and through a high level of attention paid to Francoist victims.²⁹⁷

Newspaper *El Mundo*, contrary to representations in *eldiario.es* but like those in *El País*, places its emphasis on the political value of the event rather than a moral significance. It thereby strongly underlines the political manipulation of the PSOE in the process and downplays the significance of the exhumation for the remaining victims of Francoism in society. The newspaper thereby focuses on the process in which, as they describe, the PSOE has used historical memory as an electoral weapon, rather than on historical memory itself. While – although subtly – framing the event as righteous, the newspaper describes how Franco's exhumation does not carry much significance for the general public in Spain, who, according to *El Mundo*, are more interested in other issues such as the economic crisis or the rise of separatist movements. They frame the socialist party to be responsible for disturbing the political consensus in the country by initiating the exhumation, thereby implying that this consensus had existed until the PSOE commenced the reburial. *El Mundo* thereby argues that

²⁹⁷ Original quotation: “Un éxito completo de la memoria histórica.”; Sáenz de Ugarte, “El bicho abandona volando el mausoleo de Cuelgamuros.”

the silence that existed before the reburial reflected a democratic consensus that kept the country stable and prevented political and social unrest, accusing the PSOE of breaking this silence and further endangering the country's stability.

It becomes clear that historical memory frameworks presented around the exhumation have been mainly featured as a way of incentivizing political preferences among readers of the newspapers, for example by framing political actors as being supportive of recovering historical memory or Francoism. The high level of attention paid to electoral practices during this period thereby makes clear that especially newspapers *El País* and *El Mundo* ascribed more significance to the event in terms of its political outcome than of its results for reconciliation and the recovery of historical memory, thereby implying a rupture in the consensus of silence that had existed since the democratic transition.

6.3 The position of Spain towards the EU

One of the significant aspects of the exhumation was its timing, Spain being in the midst of a constitutional crisis and the legitimacy of its relationship with the EU being questioned. As a member of the EU, the country had constructed policies during the transition and around the turn of the century that adhered to European practices, such as a focus on the future during the transition and the memory boom in the beginning of the 2000s. Here, this research will describe whether the position of Spain towards the EU was mobilized in the domestic debate over Franco's exhumation as well, showing that Spain's two biggest newspapers call upon European memory practices to confirm their arguments.

Already during the economic progress of the 1960s, Spain had gained more interest in adopting societal aspects resembling other Western European countries, especially shown in the emergence of a consumerist society. The political desire for these resemblances continued after Franco's death, in the adoption of narratives describing a tragedy which should never happen again, similar to frameworks of the Holocaust. The drive to be 'progressive' and legitimately belong to the European Community led the Spanish government to focus on policies aimed at the future rather than the past, showing how the country's image of and relation with Europe influenced its political course of action. This is again shown during the period of revival of historical memory in the region, a trend which Spain followed, and which was especially endorsed by international implications of hypocrisy following the arrest of Pinochet. The influence of European memory developments in Spanish discourse are confirmed in the Law of Historical Memory, in which notions of democratic dialogue and a

pluralization of voices are promoted, similar to how Europe enlarged its frameworks of historical memory when several eastern-European countries joined the Union in 2004.

Where *eldiario.es* does not (significantly) feature the role of memory developments in the European Union in discussion regarding the exhumation, *El País* and *El Mundo* do take on the event to underline their view of Spain's democratic legitimacy in relation to the EU. The former thereby presents the reburial as confirming the development of legitimate European practices in the country, by, for example, stating that Franco 'in a normal country' would be exhumed as well. Although the description is used to condemn anti-exhumation parties, it also confirms how Spain is now more like 'a normal country.' The newspaper, furthermore, endorses the view that the success of Spain's transition enabled the country to join the EU as a legitimate member through the defeat of Francoism. It frames the reburial as the final step in this defeat, thereby implying that through the exhumation, Spain's legitimacy in the EU is again confirmed. *El Mundo*, on the other hand, confirms the success of the transition to strengthen the view that the exhumation is unnecessary and that the political manipulations surrounding the event strongly counter its legitimacy.

It thereby becomes clear that newspapers *El País* and *El Mundo* frame the EU as exemplary of 'normal' countries, after which Spain is placed next to it and framed as 'abnormal.' Where in *El País* this comparison is made to illustrate the righteousness of the exhumation, *El Mundo* applies the contradiction to argue for the illegitimacy of the PSOE's electoralism. As with historical memory frameworks, the position of Spain towards the EU is mobilized to support specific political actors.

6.4 Conclusion

Lastly, this research has reached the point in which it is able to answer the main question of how Spanish memory frameworks of Spain's Francoist past were expressed in public debates around Franco's exhumation and how they reflected Spain's growing political divide.

During a time in which the legitimacy of Spain's democratic nature has been questioned, the exhumation has deepened the political divide in the country, as narratives in the media present how political discussions regarding the event are infused with allegations of manipulation and aligning parties with Francoism. Although in public discourse, the reburial has been presented as strengthening democracy's legitimacy in the country, the process by which it was executed has been framed as weakening it as well. Historical memory frameworks regarding Francoism have thereby been heavily utilized by political parties as presented in the media, and by the investigated newspapers themselves. Such frameworks are

employed in various ways, and are connected to a legitimacy crisis of Spain's democratic nature. In rightist newspaper *El Mundo*, the exhumation is framed as destructive for the post-Francoist regime and the success of forgetting the past is promoted. In *El País*, newspaper representing the center-left, the reburial is framed as the final step in becoming a mature democracy and enhancing the country's democratic legitimacy. For *eldiario.es*, the most leftist newspaper in this research, the event is presented as one of many steps in recovering Spain's democratic legitimacy, framing the consensus of silence as highly problematic. It thereby becomes clear that these contrasting memory frameworks reflect disagreements about the current nature of Spain's democratic regime.

The analysis of the Spanish newspapers has shown that while facing its historical memory continues to divide the country, the reburial has marked a highly significant moment in this development as it culminates the process in which the repressive character of Franco's rule is officially expressed in such a way that it calls for and justifies his reburial.

Simultaneously, however, the differing representations of historical memory aspects and the controversy surrounding their political implications expressed in the media illustrate how social unrest regarding these matters is far from resolved. The silence that surrounded the transition in Spain thereby continues to play a highly significant role in whether the period is presented as a success or not. While newspaper *El País* commends the political dynamics at the time as being directed towards the future and mostly successful in dismantling Franco's regime, *eldiario.es* mainly takes on a critical approach towards this climate of silence, presenting the period as enabling the survival of Francoist remnants and as continuing the suffrage of Republican victims of the regime. *El Mundo*, on the other hand, does not pay much attention to the transitional period at all, other than simply stating that the process successfully culminated when the 1978 Constitution passed, and that further remembrance of the past does not interest the Spanish majority. These conflicting interpretations and representations in public discourse regarding the country's historical past, the outcomes of the transition and the current need for reconciliation show that the legitimacy of Spain's democracy is highly disagreed upon in public discourse. This contrast, in turn, demonstrates how the pact of forgetting, unlike representations in *El País* or *El Mundo*, was unsuccessful in enabling the country to achieve reconciliation and successfully transform Spain's society in a unified nation. Underneath the climate of silence, social and political tensions have continued to simmer and have come to the foreground again during the reburial. Although the event has been represented, especially by *El País*, as the finalization of the reconciliation process regarding historical memory and the ending of Franco's presence in Spain, the contrasting

descriptions in newspapers *eldiario.es* and *El Mundo* regarding the population's need for closure – where *eldiario.es* places its focus on surviving victims and relatives who continue to suffer and search for their family, *El Mundo* states that the majority of Spain is not interested in recovering historical memory at all – show how debates in public discourse have not reached consensus or reconciliation. The differing representations of the Franco family across *El País* and *El Mundo*, Spain's two biggest newspapers, further confirms the notion that historical memory frameworks regarding Francoism and its aftermath are far from unanimous, implying that future issues regarding historical memory will not be without social or political complications. The reburial has thereby indicated the ending of Spain's pact of silence, showing that official frameworks are now open to contestation and that the nature of Spain's democracy is highly contested and possibly deepened through such frameworks.

Abstract

For almost 44 years after his death, the remains of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco resided in a central place in the Valley of the Fallen, a grand mausoleum built during his rule in Madrid. Franco's reburial on October 24, 2019, took place in a period of great political significance, in which party divisions were deepening and the legitimacy of Spain's democracy was questioned. The political debates sparked by the exhumation included strong allegations of Francoism and delegitimizing Spain's democracy, showing that the historical memory of Franco continues to play a large role in keeping political parties from reaching a consensus, as represented in public discourse. This research explains how historical memory frameworks of Francoism have influenced the political divisions surrounding Franco's exhumation as portrayed in public debate. It will thereby focus on discussions and representations in Spanish media regarding these influences and their dividing effects. This research will not only explain how historical narratives are used for political purposes by public actors – in this case, newspapers –, but also how the analyzed media functions as active agents in constructing and transferring these narratives. As a large part of the population are too young to remember the Francoist period, the high level of influence of these actors in constructing historical memory becomes apparent. In this case, it has become clear that each investigated national newspaper – *El País*, *eldiario.es* and *El Mundo* – has offered varying interpretations on Spain's path to reconciliation. Where the repressive aspect of Franco's rule seems to be confirmed across the various media, the aftermath of his regime is heavily debated and differently presented in the newspapers. The period of political silence following Franco's death, as well as the recovery of historical memory that has been progressing over the past twenty years, are either praised or condemned in each newspaper. In this way, it has become clear that these forms of public media do not only construct and transfer clear interpretations of Spain's past, but also link these ideas to political views and parties, thereby promoting and demoting political actors. In the case of Franco's exhumation, the influence of historical memory on the political debate is strongly underlined in the media and shows that Spain continues to be at odds on how to achieve (political) reconciliation and whether this is even necessary.

Keywords

Historical memory; Francisco Franco; Spanish Civil War; Pact of Forgetting; Reconciliation; Exhumation; Valley of the Fallen; Electoralism; Memory politics; Myth of equal responsibility.

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