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Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Rethinking Americanization, National Identity, and "Difference" in Post-Franco Spain

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Rethinking Americanization in Spain

Hamilton Stapell

Introduction

Europe has long suffered a love-hate relationship with the United States. Imagining America as a kind of paradise or hell has been the essence of the European perception of America since the Age of Columbus. Over the past century, America has come to simultaneously symbolize freedom, fun, opportunity, and modernity along with unbridled consumption, greed, social conformity, and cultural deprivation. Nevertheless, people across Europe have, to varying degrees, embraced the image of America and its cultural products. In fact, it is sometimes quipped that the only culture that the 740 million people of Europe have in common is American culture.[1] But have all Europeans embraced – and at times rejected – this American culture in the same way, to the same degree, and for the same reasons?

While these questions have been well explored in Germany and France, and to some extent in England and Italy, very little research has been done on the subject with regards to Spain.[2] Despite the presence

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[1] Back in the 1990s the Norwegian media researcher Helge Ronning suggested it was plausible to suppose that American popular culture would become everyone's second culture in Europe, creating a certain bilingualism. See Helge Ronning, *Media and Democracy* (Harave: Sapes Books, 1994).

[2] Each of the following anthologies contain chapters on Americanization ranging everywhere from Greece to Sweden, with the curious exception of Spain: Mike-Frank Epitropoulos, ed., *American Culture in Europe: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1999); Rob Kroes, ed., *If You've Seen One, You've Seen the Mall: Europeans and American Mass Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); R. Kroes, ed., *Cultural Transmissions and Receptions: American Mass Culture in Europe* (Amsterdam: Vu University Press, 1993); George McKay, ed., *Yankee Go Home (& Take Me with U): Americanization and Popular Culture* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Roger Rollins, ed., *The Americanization of the Global Village* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Press, 1989); David Slater and Peter Taylor, eds., *The American Century: Consensus and Coercion in the Projection of American Power* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1999); and Heide Fehrenbach and Uta Poiger, eds., *Transactions, Transgressions, Transformations: American Culture in Western Europe and Japan* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000). For a review of Americanization in Germany see Ralph Willett, *The Americanization of Germany, 1945-1949* (London: Routledge Press, 1989); Gerd Gemunden, *Framed Visions: Popular Culture, Americanization, and the Contemporary German and Austrian Imagination* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998); Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War* ((Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina

of numerous American military bases (for more than 40 years) and Spaniards' obvious love for blue jeans, Marlboro cigarettes, and American movies, Spain has nonetheless been curiously left out of many of the debates over Americanization. This current work tries to remedy that situation, and seeks to make three main contributions to the discussion of Americanization and to the history of Europe in the second half of the twentieth century.

First, this paper attempts to insert the case of Spain into the broader debates about Americanization in order to offer a better understanding of the process of Americanization in Europe as a whole. Specifically, it shows that European countries have not all embraced (or rejected) American culture in the same way, to the same degree, and for the same reasons. In other words, there has not been a single kind of reaction to American cultural influence in the postwar period. Second, through a comparison with France, this paper demonstrates that Spain, in terms of national identity and cultural confidence, may be somewhat of an exception to the European norm, at least in the 1980s and 1990s. Specifically, Spain did not suffer from the same kind of cultural insecurity and anxieties that plagued other European countries during this period. For example, there appears to be little fear of American cultural imperialism in Spain, with the country's open embrace of Hollywood movies, fast food, and casual fashion. Another example of this apparent confidence to resist American cultural domination was the persistent attempt to lure Euro Disneyland to the Iberian Peninsula in the mid 1980s. In these cases, certain segments of the population were ready and comfortably willing to adapt American cultural products to serve their own ends, namely economic development and international "normalcy." Third, this paper attempts to offer a new perspective on the long-standing historiographical question of whether Spain's development (political structure, economic modernization, national identity, etc.) in the modern period has been fundamentally the same or different from the rest of Europe's. Or, in other words, was General

Press, 1994); and Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). For a review of Americanization in France see Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), and Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berekely: University of California Press, 1993). For a general overview of Americanization since World War II see Richard Pell, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture Since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997) and Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2005).

Francisco Franco ultimately correct when he proudly proclaimed: "Spain is different!"

Conceptualizing Americanization in the European Context

While Spain has mostly sat on the sidelines, two broad interpretive issues have emerged in the study of Americanization and globalization. The first debate centers on the question of whether or not the process of Americanization is producing global uniformity under American domination. In other words, does Americanization create uniformity and convergence, or does the host culture assimilate American mass culture and sustain a degree of divergence? Some scholars view Americanization as an irresistible power that is so potent that it homogenizes the globe. This thesis is commonly known as "Coca-Colonization."[3] On the other hand, others argue that American cultural products are selected, domesticated, and/or adapted so that national differences survive or are even reinforced. This is the theory of cultural syncretism, hybridization, or "Creolization."[4]

The second, but interrelated, debate focuses on intentions and motivations. Some scholars, especially those writing in the wake of World War II, view Americanization as a benevolent process of modernization by which the United States, through its political, economic and cultural presence, develops liberal democracies, market economies, and consumer cultures abroad.[5] Many critics, however, especially those influenced by the Vietnam era of protest and dissent, have seen Americanization strictly as a form of cultural imperialism. From this perspective, American culture is viewed as a manipulative tool that strengthens American economic and political hegemony abroad and eliminates diversity.[6]

Aside from these two debates, there has been a more recent shift away from the study of the penetration of American products into foreign markets to a consideration of how they are received abroad. In other words, the focus has increasingly shifted from "transmission" to "reception." This important shift first began in the late 1980s with the

[3] See for example Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War*; and Slater, *The American Century*.
[4] See for example Epitropoulos, *American Culture in Europe*; Kroes, *If You've Seen One, You've Seen the Mall*; and Fehrenbach and Poiger, *Transactions, Transgressions, Transformations*.
[5] The best treatment of the stabilizing impact of Americanization in postwar Europe is Peter Duignan and L. H. Gann, *The Rebirth of the West: The Americanization of the Democratic World, 1945-1958* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Press, 1992).
[6] For the best review of the cultural imperialism argument see John Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991).

publication of ethnographic investigations that questioned both the uniformity of message (i.e., "American" culture is not fixed; instead, it is diverse and ever changing) and the response to American cultural exports.[7] These studies attempted to uncover the role that American culture and its consumption have played in the negotiation, and renegotiation, of "identity."[8] And, most significantly, they have also questioned the concept of cultural imperialism by emphasizing how recipients have selected, adapted, and transformed what America has sent them.

Despite the often contentious debates over the analytical framework of Americanization, scholars do agree that its overall impact has been significant. More than anywhere else on the globe, Europe has been the focus of America's economic, political, and cultural power in the twentieth century. Western Europeans, in particular have been the primary target of Uncle Sam's attention since 1945. First, the Second World War, and later the Cold War, brought American troops, goods, values, and popular culture to Europe. In the postwar era, the Marshall Plan rebuilt Europeans nations economically, while the Fulbright Program was designed to culturally reeducate Europeans in the wake of Fascism. The result was often the acceptance of American values and the development of consumer societies in the 1950s and 1960s. In the following decades, the American government, along with American corporations and the American mass media, continued to export their vision of the world and their merchandise to Europe. As a result, Europeans now eat, dress, work, live, entertain themselves, and even speak more like Americans. [9] In short, contemporary Europe is a dramatically different place today because of Americanization. But, again, what role did it play in Spain? And how have Spaniards responded? Some of the answers to these questions can be found through a comparison with the rest of Europe. And one of the most illuminating examples is the difference between Spain's and France's reaction to Americanization, particularly in the 1980s.

Spain and France in the 1980s

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[7] See Ien Ang, *Watching Dallas: Soap opera and the melodramatic imagination* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985) and Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz, *The Export of Meaning: Cross-cultural reading of Dallas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[8] The best example of this trend is Fehrenbach and Poiger, *Transactions, Transgressions, Transformations*.

[9] The most thorough and persuasive argument for this cultural and economic transformation of Europe remains de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*.

Attempting to examine the processes of Americanization in Spain and France in the 1980s has some advantages. Most importantly, and in stark contrast to previous periods, Spain finally found itself in a situation where it was in many ways politically, economically, and socially similar to that of the rest of Europe. After a devastating civil war and almost forty years of dictatorship, Spain experienced a smooth transition to democracy after Francisco Franco's death in 1975. And with the 1982 election, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) ushered in a period of political stability. At the same time, there was also a degree of economic normalcy, despite relatively high unemployment. Spaniards were working hard to achieve the same standard of living and level of economic modernization as the rest of Europe. Spaniards were also engaged in many of the same broader international debates: the future of NATO, the opportunities of a common market, solutions to economic recession, and the dilemma of international terrorism. In addition, the development of a mass consumer society in the 1960s, along with Spaniards studying and working aboard, brought large numbers of American and European goods and ideas into the country. These developments accelerated in the 1970s, and continued into the 1980s.

The 1980s then represent a kind of high water mark for American popular culture in Spain and in Europe in general.[10] Europe's consumer societies were fully developed by this time, and American corporations and leisure industries tried to make the most of these opportunities. Blue jeans, college sweatshirts, baseball caps, Nikes, American cigarettes, and American blockbuster films were promoted and consumed in high quantities all over Europe.[11] Not surprisingly, it is also in the 1980s that Americanization became seen as a real cultural danger, especially in France and West Germany.[12] While French and West German resistance to Americanization has been well established in the existing scholarship, Spain's reaction has remained less clear.

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[10] Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, 212-227.

[11] It is estimated that an average of eighty percent of all foreign movies shown in Western Europe during this time were American, see John Dean, "The diffusion of American culture in Western Europe since World War II: a cross-cultural survey," *Journal of American Culture*, 1991, 20, 11-25.

[12] French cultural insecurities are well established in Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, and Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization*. For a review of German resistance to Americanization see Ralph Willett, *The Americanization of Germany*; Gerd Gemunden, *Framed Visions: Popular Culture, Americanization, and the Contemporary German and Austrian Imagination*; and Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War*.

It now appears that Spain may be somewhat of an exception to the European norm. The country simply did not suffer from the same kind of cultural anxieties that plagued France and West Germany during this period. Few examples of this insecurity can be found in the Spanish press. Instead, there are condescending and dismissive images that portray Ronald Reagan as a hobo, and as a diminutive woman, wearing a traditional Spanish flamenco dress.[13] In these examples there appears to be little fear of American cultural imperialism or domination; there are also no phallic missiles, no menacing Rambos on the verge of destroying Spanish culture, and no Godzilla-sized Mickey Mouses smashing through Spanish cities. Another example of Spaniards' apparent confidence to resist Americanization was their persistent attempts to lure Euro Disneyland to the Iberian Peninsula in the mid 1980s.[14]

In fact, a headline in Spain's main newspaper, *El País*, on August 10, 1985, read: "Everyone wants Disney here at whatever the price."[15] The possibility of Disney coming to Spain was seen as such a prize that officials from various regions actually fought over locating the park in their districts. Tarragona, Castellon, Valencia, and Alicante all hoped to win the right to host the park. The mayor of the coastal town of Ametlla declared that locating the park in his area "would be like a kind of miracle that has never existed before. Greater than *el gordo* [Spain's national lottery], it would be *el gordisimo*."[16] And it wasn't only Spanish politicians who wanted the park. *El Pais* reported that: "From Santa Pola, in Alicante, to Ametlla de Mar, in Castellon, the dozens of business men, hotel owners, and ordinary citizens interviewed for this newspaper stated that the area of development…would enormously benefit from the park."[17] Another headline from the same period declared, "Everyone wants Mickey Mouse here."[18] And individual

[13] Luis Peiro, "Adiós, Mister Marshall," *Cambio 16*, November 23, 1987, 16–22; "A Qué Viene Reagan." *Cambio 16*, November 2, 1985, 1.

[14] At the same time when the Spanish were trying to lure Disney to the Iberian Peninsula, the French were adamantly against the prospect of Disney locating just outside Paris. In the most frequently cited quote from the period, the prominent theater director, Ariane Mnouchkine, declared that Disney's project was "a cultural Chernobyl," which would poison French and European culture (Pells, *Not Like Us*, 309).

[15] Gustavo Matías, "Todos Quieren Disneylandia a Cualquier Precio," *El País*, August 10, 1985, 31.

[16] Gustavo Matías, "El Estado Prevé Destinar 20.000 Millones Para Las Expropiaciones de Terrenos Del Parque de Disneylandia," *El País*, August 9, 1985, 37.

[17] Matías, "Todos Quieren Disneylandia," 31.

[18] "Todos Quieren a Mickey Mouse," *El País*, June 30, 1985, 66.

regional governments were so eager to bring the park to their regions that they even offered additional incentives above and beyond the official offer from Madrid.

In contrast to what going on in Spain during this period, French intellectuals and the media frequently spoke of cultural "imperialism" by the United States.[19] There was a great deal of worry about a diminished sense of national identity, and, at the same time, a desire to safeguard the country's "Frenchness." Throughout the course of the 1980s, France's Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, openly tried to limit the penetration of American mass media, particularly films and television programs.

In fact, both Lang and the French Prime Minister, François Mitterrand, called for a system of taxes and quotas to reduce America's cultural influence. And, in the early 1980s, the French National Assembly even ordered that all popular music radio programs include at least 40 percent French-language songs.[20] In contrast, the Spanish Minister of Culture, Javier Solana, and Spain's Socialist government sought greater cultural cooperation and connections with the United States during this time.[21] As discussed further below, the PSOE pursued these cultural exchanges with America – and the rest of Europe – out of a desire to both bolster its international reputation and to leave its Francoist past behind.

In addition, beginning as early as the 1960s, French officials also tried to restrict the number of Anglo-American words that could be appear in public documents and in the media. The concern was that American words – such as cheeseburger, supermarket, and software – were "invading" and thus undermining the French civilization. Fears of this linguistic colonization reached a high-water mark in the early 1990s when the French National Assembly debated banning more than 3,000 English words and phrases from all commercial and public use.[22] However, no such efforts to restrict Anglo-American words ever occurred in Spain.

Moreover, the Spanish central government never tried to ban the opening of the movie *Jurassic Park* or attempted to outlaw the sale of

[19] Richard Kuisel, "The Gallic Rooster Crows Again: The Paradox of French Anti-Americanism," *French Politics, Culture & Society*, 19, no. 3 (Fall 2001), 1-16.
[20] Pells, *Not Like Us*, 272.
[21] See Chapter 7 in Hamilton Stapell, *Remaking Making Madrid: Culture, Politics, and Identity after Franco* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[22] Pells, *Not Like Us*, 272.

Coca-Cola – because it was seen as a threat to public health – as the French government had done. In fact, just the opposite is true. It appears that many Spaniards welcomed American investment, business know-how, and cultural products (especially Hollywood) with open arms.[23] In these cases, Spanish men and women were ready and comfortably willing to adapt American cultural products to serve their own ends, namely economic development, and a feeling of full European integration. Overall, based on evidence from both the press and the academic literature, it appears that Spain's reaction to Americanization differed significantly from that of the rest of Europe, especially France.

However, it is also important to note that while there may have been no apparent animosity towards American cultural products, a certain degree of anti-Americanism did exist in Spain in the 1980s, mostly as a result of Cold War politics. In fact, debates surrounding the NATO referendum and the presence of American military bases and nuclear weapons provoked anti-American sentiment throughout Spain. America's militant anti-communist stance made European defense and rearmament a priority, which in turn incited many Spaniards to accuse the United States of warmongering and to write "Yankee Go Home" on the walls of many Spanish towns. However, there is little evidence that this political or strategic anti-Americanism was translated into a fear of American culture. While Spaniards may have had reservations when it came to hosting the American military, they appear to have no problem hosting American movies, Mickey Mouse, and McDonald's restaurants.

Understanding the Difference

This brings us to the fundamental question of why many Europeans – and especially the French – have been so wary of being seduced by American culture, while Spaniards have not. One answer to this question seems to lie in differences in national identity. Richard Kuisel has argued that French resistance to Americanization stemmed from a perception that their collective identity as a nation was at risk. For the French, America functioned as a foil that forced the country to assert what was distinctively French. To put it another way, America served as the "other" that helped the French to imagine, construct, and refine their collective sense of self. According to Kuisel, cultural anti-Americanism was specifically formed "during the first postwar decades,

[23] In the 1980s, Spain became one of the biggest importers of Hollywood movies, television programs, and even senior personal. See Jeremy Tunstall, *The Anglo-American Media Connection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 210-214.

a period of sinking self-confidence about the nation's status, when the American other seemed on the verge of eradicating Frenchness."[24] In other words, it was their Frenchness, or France's national identity, that was threatened by American cultural influence.

The implication of Kuisel's argument, although he never quite states it as such, is that France suffered from an identity crisis in the postwar period. Brian Jenkins and Nigel Copsey make exactly this point in their work, namely that France's national identity was based on a series of irreconcilable contradictions after the Second World War.[25] Specifically, it was France's new position as a second-class, post-colonial power that created first a crisis and then a contestation of national identity. Along the same lines, Etienne Balibar has argued that it was exactly France's experience as a former colonizer that allowed the French to interpret the postwar economic and cultural Americanization of France as a form of colonization.[26] In this context, French resistance to American popular cultural becomes more clear.

Again, for France, America was a kind of mirror in which the French viewed themselves. By inventing an America that reeked of materialism, vulgarity, and conformity, the French separated themselves from the United States; but, more importantly, they attempted to redefine their own post-war identity through this process. Resistance to Americanization derived from a need to maintain a sense of French difference, superiority, and universal mission (i.e., the safeguarding of *civilization*) in a period of rapid change and uncertainty. In short, France's national identity crisis manifested itself in the form of anti-Americanism and fear of Americanization in the 1980s.

If the French fear of Americanization was a result of a weak national identity, does the lack of fear and anxiety in Spain mean that Spanish national identity was strong in this period? This conclusion would answer the question as to why Spaniards did not use America as a kind of mirror to reflect their insecurities. But it would also contradict the most commonly held interpretations of Spanish national identity and nationalism, namely that they have been historically weak or even non-existent. In fact, most scholars would argue today that Spanish unity,

[24] Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, 235.
[25] Brian Jenkins and Nigel Copsey, "Nation, nationalism, and national identity in France," in Brian Jenkins and Spyros Sofos, eds., *Nation and Identity in Contemporary Europe* (London and New York: Routledge Press, 1996).
[26] Etienne Balibar, *Les frontiérs de la democratié* (Paris 1991), 57-65, cited in Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*. This process has extended to other groups, for example, to Muslim immigrants who are seen to pose a similar danger to national identity.

under an administratively weak state, was largely artificial well into the twentieth century; nor is nationalism seen as an important force for social or political cohesion in the post-Franco period.

In fact, no national flag existed in Spain before 1843, and the national anthem dates from the twentieth century. According to Stanley Payne, "in no other European country has nationalism been weaker in Spain prior to 1936."[27] Nor is the Franco regime seen as a period that developed authentic nation identity. Francoist nationalism was not integrative; rather it sought to Castilianize, by replacing all traces of Spain's liberal past with an intolerant, anti-secular, anti-intellectual, and anti-foreign Catholic conservatism.[28] Subsequently, Spanish nationalism was tarnished by its links with the dictatorship. Victor Pérez-Díaz argues that, "The very concept of Spain had become tainted by association with nations of grandiloquent and vacuous imperialism, enforced Catholicism and centralized and authoritarian unitarism."[29] In addition, elsewhere in Europe nationalism has been linked to economic modernization. However, Spain was a latecomer to industrialization. In fact, in some parts of the country, industrial development did not fully get underway until the 1960s and 1970s. Developments after the transition to democracy are not usually seen as fostering national unity, or identity, either. After the forcible suppression of regional identities for forty years under the dictatorship, the Spanish territory was divided up into 17 autonomous communities, each with its own statute of autonomy and regional assembly by 1984. Scholars have traditionally called on the combination of these factors to make the case for a weak Spanish national identity throughout the twentieth century.

Despite these arguments to the contrary, Spain indeed may have had some kind of a secure national identity, or at least cultural identity, by the 1980s. Even though this conclusion might not be acceptable to some, there is an important case to be made here. First, Spain, unlike France, never suffered defeat and occupation in the Second World War. While Spain may have been devastated by its own earlier civil war, the country was nevertheless rebuilt by the Spaniards themselves, or at least by a portion of them, and not Americans. Spain also never suffered a threat to national identity from an Allied occupation, not even temporarily. Nor did it receive a single penny of Marshall Plan aid.

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[27] Stanley Payne, "Nationalism, regionalism, and micronationalisn in Spain" *Journal of Contemporary History*, 26:1991, 479.

[28] Brian Jenkins and Nigel Copsey, "Nation, nationalism, and national identity in France,"157-158

[29] Victor Pérez Díaz, *The Return of Civil Society. The Emergence of Democratic Spain*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 197.

More importantly, it is also reasonable to suggest that Franco's forty-year effort to construct an official national identity had a lasting impact as well. While many Spaniards, especially those on the left, may have wished to distance themselves from the central state after the dictator's death, they may have nonetheless retained a certain sense of "Spanishness." Even though this Spanishness had been unwanted and "artificially" created, it is reasonable to argue that it left a lasting imprint on many Spaniards nonetheless. In addition, Spain's many regional identities probably play a role here as well. It may be that strong regional affiliations further prevent a feeling of cultural "insecurity" during this period.[30]

Perhaps most importantly, Spaniards' enthusiastic acceptance of American culture may also be due to the fact that the process of Americanization first made its way into Spain in disguise. This is a key point. Franco's decision in the late 1950s to move from autarky to a European economic development plan based on open markets and increased consumption may have unknowingly embraced Americanization. Scholars agree that France, West Germany, and Austria took, or were "persuaded" to take, the American-funded path towards a mass consumer society immediately after World War II. While Spaniards were still suffering the effects of autarky at home, the rest of Europe rushed to develop consumer societies in the 1950s, quickly adopting most of its key products: televisions, refrigerators, and – the dream of Marshall Plan missionaries – the automobile. Western Europe "engaged in the pursuit of abundance and in so doing developed, among other things, a more productive and more service oriented economy, a higher standard of living, a social status dependent on levels of consumption, and a more commercialized culture."[31] This process also happened in Spain, but a decade later and in the form of "Europeanization." After the self-sufficiency failure, Franco's technocrats hoped to trade economic development for political stability and acceptance in the 1960s. Just like the Marshall Plan officials, they hoped for a *Siescentos* for everyone. It may be in this shift that we find the origins of Spain's apparent inoculation against the perceived evils of Americanization. In other words, Americanization first came to Spain

[30] For more in the strength of regional identities during this period, see the work of Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas, including "Regions, nations and nationalities: On the Process of Territorial Identity-Building During Spain's Democratic Transition and Consolidation," in Carlos H. Waisman and Raanan Rein (eds.), *Spanish and Latin American Transitions to Democracy* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005) 55-79.
[31] Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, 231-232.

in the 1960s; but, it came dressed as "Europeanization" and "modernization."

Then, later in the 1980s, after the end of the dictatorship, when the rest of Europe was wrestling economically and intellectually with the long-term effects of Americanization, Spaniards increasingly set for themselves the goal of becoming ever *more* European and, perhaps unknowingly, *more* American. This is another key point. After the end of the authoritarian regime, rather than forging a new form of collective identity through "opposition," as the French had done after World War II, Spaniards tried to negotiate a new democratic identity through "inclusion," namely the inclusion of Spain in the rest of Europe. In fact, many Spaniards eagerly hoped for "convergence," in other words, to reach the same standard of living and way of life as their European neighbors. That desire translated into more home stereos, refrigerators, and cars. But, this desire to catch up with the rest of Europe also meant openly embracing mass consumerism and, by extension, a more American lifestyle. Spaniards thus unquestioningly and unwittingly accepted the process of Americanization as "normal" in their attempt to identify themselves with the rest of Europe. From this perspective, the process of Americanization in Spain may be hidden – from both Spaniards and from outsider observers – by its attempt to "normalize" after the transition to democracy. The combination of these factors may account for many Spaniards' willingness to accept American cultural influences into their country. It may also be the case that just as Spain was a decade behind realizing a mass consumer society, the backlash against the effects of Americanization/Europeanization may also be lagging behind.[32]

Conclusion

This leaves the final historiographical question of whether or not Spain's development in the twentieth century is different from the rest of Europe's. In the context of Americanization, this is a difficult question to answer. First, I would argue that Spaniards had some kind of secure cultural identity in the 1980s due to almost forty years of attempted cultural homogenization under Franco, and from the lack of direct American influence immediately following World War II. This seems different from other European examples. Second, I would argue for the somewhat contradictory thesis that Spain is not necessarily different from the rest of Europe, but suffers only a difference in timing.

[32] For example, the more recent popular demonstrations in Spain (post 2008) can be understood as a manifestation of that backlash.

Americanization happened in Spain. But it first happened in the 1960s under the guise of "Europeanization," rather than in the 1950s with literally American "boots on the ground." Later, in the 1980s, the process of Americanization accelerated further with the drive toward European convergence. These factors may account for many Spaniards' greater willingness to accept American cultural goods and practices into their country. It is also possible that current and future criticisms from Spain concerning "modernization" and "Europeanization" actually address the issue of Americanization, and therefore should be read as such. With this understanding, we might be better able to insert Spain into the current debates over Americanization in the future.

Speaking of the future, much more work on this subject needs to be done. I would call on other scholars of Spain to pose additional questions related to Americanization. For example, is it possible to identify specific segments of the population that embraced American culture as a way to chart or establish a new identity? I'm thinking here of the various youth movements both before and after the transition to democracy. Also the question whether or not American culture threatens or reinforces established norms in Spain, such as traditional gender norms and notions of racial hierarchies, needs to be considered. The answers to these questions will hopefully allow us to better understand how Spain, and European societies in general, have come to terms with the increasingly pervasive presence of American culture since the end of World War II.