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24

FROM PATRIOTISM TO LIBERALISM

Political concepts in revolution

Javier Fernández Sebastián

This chapter offers an overview of certain decisive changes in Spanish political language over the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. I begin by treating the unease felt among various sections of the learned élite regarding the unstable meanings of certain key terms, and the semantic battles waged with ever-increasing intensity in that time of transition between the late Enlightenment and the early stages of liberalism. As I show, such controversies over meanings gave rise to interesting political-philological debates over whose remit it was to define the correct use of words. Finally, I show that with the crisis of the Spanish monarchy in 1808, and the following process of politicization, a set of interlinked concepts – including "patria," "revolución," "nación," "independencia," "libertad," "constitución," and several others – quickly gained prominence in contemporary discussions, and provided the foundations for political vocabulary to be comprehensively updated. My focus is essentially historical-conceptual, and seeks to integrate several different perspectives, including political-intellectual history, and certain developments in cultural history. Rather than eminent authors and political treatises, I rely on evidence from other types of sources, particularly ephemeral or circumstantial sources, such as parliamentary oratory, political pamphlets, or early examples of the newspaper press.

The turn of the century and upheaval in political vocabulary: the example of "patria"

Not coincidentally, at the very height of the Enlightenment and the Bourbon Reforms the whole Hispanic world began to echo to the sound of ever more frequent complaints about a supposed political-linguistic disorder, corrupting the language and distorting certain words' straightforward meanings. This concern over the abuse of words, which was not unique to Spain in the Western world, is clearly present in the work of various Peninsular authors with markedly differing sensibilities, from Cadalso, Forner, and Jovellanos to Arroyal, Capmany, and García del Cañuelo (Fernández Sebastián 2012a, 244–249). For some, of course, this unease over the flexibility of the language was not without more positive facets, too. Writers and members of the learned élite were well aware that linguistic and conceptual innovation largely depended on new cultural practices and social centres, which had caused certain words to be more frequently used, thus making them fashionable; some of these emerging terms were

themselves capable of creating expectations and giving impetus to the reforms. Thus, at the end of the 1770s, one of the founders of the Real Sociedad Bascongada de Amigos del País notes the following with some satisfaction:

> *[e]l Patriotismo, la Economía política, la Industria, etc.*, son voces que hasta estos últimos tiempos sólo se oían en boca de un corto número de Políticos; pero a resultas del fermento Patriótico que de Provincia en Provincia se ha ido difundiendo por el Reino, se han introducido ya en las conversaciones familiares, y han llegado a ser los términos favoritos del lenguaje del día, despertando con su uso continuado las ideas análogas, aplicando éstas a los respectivos objetos determinados y realizando los tales objetos en establecimientos prácticos.
>
> (Munibe 2002, 183; italics in the original)

Despite the unbridled optimism of the Conde de Peñaflorida, the truth is that at the time of his writing, the words he mentions in his speech were still rather bookish terms, whose use in erudite circles was certainly on the increase, but which were still rare among the illiterate masses. Nonetheless, patriotic language had progressed sufficiently during the eighteenth century for the philologist Antonio de Capmany to propose to the Real Academia Española during the 1780s that the term "patriotismo" should be included in the Academia's official dictionary (Étienvre 2001, 207).

However, to whatever extent these words were standard by the turn of the century, the high watermark for the use of such vocabulary was to follow soon afterwards. From spring 1808, after the sudden politicization brought on by campaigning against the favourite of Charles IV, the hated Manuel Godoy, together with the mutiny of Aranjuez and the subsequent Napoleonic invasion of the Peninsula (see Fernández Sebastián 2000, 2013a), as well as the forced abdication of the newly installed King Ferdinand VII at the hands of the French emperor, the word "patria" could be heard in all quarters, both in Peninsular Spain and in Spanish America (see Entin 2014; Lomné 2014). Decades later, Alcalá Galiano would record that this was the point when "de término usado solamente en los libros, [la palabra patria] pasó a ser aclamación popular" (Alcalá Galiano 1955, II, 319).

The uprising of the Spanish people against their French occupiers was accompanied by a huge number of pamphlets, manifestos, and proclamations in which the rebels justified their actions and called on their compatriots to support them, systematically appealing to topics that were at the forefront of the public consciousness and had great potential to mobilize their audience, such as "religión," "rey," and "patria" (Vilar 1982, 236–237). In these documents, many of which were signed by the improvised insurrectional *juntas* formed against the Bonapartes, metaphors of fire and electricity are common: very frequent reference is made to the fire of patriotism that burns in good Spaniards' hearts, for example, or to the uprising having spread through the whole country with lightning speed, and so on.

For centuries, the term "patria" had predominantly been used to allude simply to a place of birth; yet despite this ambiguity, in the eighteenth century it had begun increasingly to refer at once to the monarchy and the Spanish nation (Fernández Albaladejo 2001; Fernández Sebastián 1994). However, the pragmatic and discursive context in which this word and its cognates appeared was usually economic and educational, rather than strictly political. It was a matter of improving education, agriculture, and trade, by searching for more efficient ways in which to increase the wealth of the country and the prosperity of its inhabitants. Indeed, the *sociedades económicas* which spread through the whole realm from the 1770s, under the influence of Minister Campomanes, were also known as "sociedades patrióticas."

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Of course, in learned speeches, where the duties which the "ciudadano" owed to his "patria" were often mentioned, the writers' classical training is clearly on display, as a great number of references to "republican" texts are included, from Cicero to Montesquieu, not to mention Suárez, Mariana, and other treatise writers from the Salamancan school. In such contexts, talk of patriotism – the great civic virtue of loving one's *patria* – was primarily a means of emphasizing the traditional call to sacrifice any thoughts of personal gain for the public profit of the nation, always preferring the common good to private interest (Smith's idea of the invisible hand, which was to allow the two factors to be reconciled, was far from widely known at the time).

On the other hand, "patria," patriot, and patriotism bear a strong emotional charge which was easily associated with safeguarding native customs and institutions (including religion) against any threat that might come from outside. In the dramatic circumstances of Napoleonic aggression and the abdications of Bayonne (May 5, 1808), as popular resistance spontaneously broke out against what most Spaniards felt was a tyrannical power being illegitimately imposed, the emotional facet of this vocabulary became a tremendously important factor. Perhaps because of this, lexicometric evidence shows that written sources for this torrent of public opinion had a strong preference for using the term "patria" over "nación" (Vilar 1982, 236–237). Defending, loving, honouring, and serving the "patria:" these were the verbs that commonly took the "patria" as an object of veneration in the earliest calls to insurrection. Only at a later stage, when the *Cortes* were convened, did another more "technical," abstract set of concepts come into play, such as "nación," "constitución," and "soberanía." The ardent language of the "patria" thus emerged before the language of the "nación" (or, to put it another way, calls to arms to fight for independence preceded the demand for political liberty), which fits well with the historical sequence of events on a political, military, and institutional level.

That said, the patriotic fight against despotism was immediately linked, in certain areas of public opinion, with the need for sweeping reforms designed to safeguard the rights of citizens. The clamour for the *Cortes* to convene in order to provide the country with a new constitution was quickly heard all across the Peninsula. Significantly, when making its announcement to call the *Cortes* to convene, the *Junta Central* addressed the Spanish people, saying that "por una combinación de sucesos tan singular como feliz, la providencia ha querido que en esta crisis terrible no pudieseis dar un paso hacia la independencia sin darle también hacia la libertad" (Sevilla, October 28, 1809).

Otherwise, contemporary texts demonstrate that without losing one iota of its emotional force, "patria" was equally capable of more politicized and intellectualized meanings, in certain contexts. This versatility – which was shared by other concepts, such as "libertad" – allowed this crucial piece in the political chess game to be played on two boards simultaneously: both in the immediate response to the invasion and in the reclamation of civil and political liberties. In comparing the ancient and modern meanings of the word, the poet Manuel J. Quintana was pleased to see the "sagrado fuego" of patriotism being kindled again among Spaniards, bringing with it the longed-for rebirth of the traditional meaning of "patria" as that "estado o sociedad" whose laws assured its citizens of their liberty and well-being (*Semanario Patriótico*, September 15, 1808).

A few weeks later, Quintana himself wrote a *Manifiesto de la Junta Central a la Nación*, dated October 26, 1808, in Aranjuez, which included the following claim: "La Patria, Españoles, no debe ser ya un nombre vano y vago para vosotros: debe significar en vuestros oídos y en vuestro corazón el santuario de las leyes y de las costumbres, el campo de los talentos y la recompensa de las virtudes." The illocutionary force of the text is striking here, clear from

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the admonitory tone of "debe significar . . ." whose goal is to persuade the reader to modify the content generally attributed to that expression. Many newspaper articles, pamphlets, and parliamentary speeches of the time, especially those whose authors were liberals, showed a similar desire to redefine other key political terms ("ciudadano," "nación," "constitución," "soberanía," "representación," "opinión pública," and several others).

As far as the concept under discussion here is concerned, the focus of all this rhetoric was that the *Cortes* of the nation should convene as soon as possible for its representatives to set down a constitution for the country. "¡Dadnos una patria!" was the cry issued to the provisional authorities in the edition of *Semanario Patriótico* published on September 15, 1808. Since, according to Quintana, Flórez Estrada, and many others, the "verdadera patria" in a republican sense only existed under a constitutional regime, then only when "despotismo" was definitively in the past and liberty was guaranteed could it be confirmed, strictly speaking, that the Spanish people at last belonged to a "patria" – the claim emphatically made by one representative, Agustín de Argüelles, when he presented the text of the constitution in 1812 (see Fernández Sebastián and Fuentes 2002, 515–517).

However, it is no less true that, as noted by Alcalá Galiano, patriotism was already present before the constitutional regime gave it a republican hue: proof of this is the fact that Spaniards threw themselves into battle in 1808 "a la voz de patria unida con la de rey," four years before the constitution was promulgated (Alcalá Galiano 1984, 24).

Governing the language

Under pressure as events developed at a startling rate, many other concepts changed not only their meaning, but also their political and moral overtones during those years. One of the most remarkable examples of this transvaluation is the word "revolución." This term, whose abuses during the decade of the French Revolution had rendered it a hateful word, was rehabilitated on being applied to the Peninsular context. According to the manifesto published by the *Junta Central* on October 26, 1808, "la revolución española tendrá [. . .] un carácter totalmente diferente de la revolución francesa." While the French Revolution was usually seen as the sum of all political evils, the revolution in Spain was considered inevitable and beneficial, even in circles that were not necessarily constitutionalist. The Conde de Montijo, for example, reclaimed for himself the title "revolucionario" (which he considered honourable, as opposed to the deplorable epithet "faccioso"), and made a careful distinction between the concepts of "revolución" and "motín." While a "motín" could never be acceptable, Montijo's contention was that in the circumstances in which Spain found itself, "revolución" effectively denoted a patriotic obligation: "Es necesario revolver para ordenar lo que está fuera de orden, y aun es un deber de los pueblos el revolverse contra cualquiera fuerza extraña o doméstica que tiránicamente los intente oprimir. He aquí nuestra revolución; todos estamos obligados a sostenerla; todos somos revolucionarios" (García Godoy 1999, 47; 58; Montijo 1810).

This kind of political-linguistic polemic was not only the concern of those who wrote for an abundant newspaper press, making early use of the freedom of the press decreed by the *Cortes* in Cádiz in November 1810; rather, it also comprised a significant part of parliamentary debate (Fernández Sebastián 2008, 2012a). Strictly speaking, this was nothing new, since, as indicated previously, debates on language and its relationship to public life were already the order of the day in the intellectual media as early as the late eighteenth century.

In a short book published in 1806, the diplomat and philologist Santiago Jonama categorically affirms that "el lenguaje es una república libre, y no sufre más leyes que las que dicta la pluralidad" (Jonama 1836, 19). This metaphor of language as a democracy may surprise a

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reader unaware of just how far politics and philosophy of language overlapped each other in those early years of the nineteenth century. Indeed, many political, historical, and philosophical issues then appeared to be inextricably intertwined.

The political-semantic controversies referred to previously, and which will be the focus of the next section, were in turned linked to another theme that was no less contentious, which may be summarized by the following question: Who is the ultimate authority on the meanings of words? Is it the common people, or the educated few?

This is a thorny issue and has been the focus of debate between many authors since Antiquity, with arguments advanced on both sides.[1] The matter is further complicated by the fact that since the medieval period, there has also been a temporal aspect to this question. Where should the best guides for correct use of the language be sought? Should the normative model be the language of the best writers of a remote "golden age," or that of contemporary writers, or even the courtier's manner of speech Or should attention be paid instead to the common usage of the majority of current Spanish speakers, which implicitly tips the scales towards the masses and the contemporary lower classes?

Learned Spaniards of the late eighteenth century who discuss this issue (including, among others, Antonio de Capmany in his *Filosofía de la elocuencia* [1777], or José López de la Huerta in his *Examen de la posibilidad de fijar la significación de los sinónimos de la lengua castellana* [1789]) in general reject "la autoridad de nuestros clásicos" in matters concerning the meanings of words, since those meanings change every day and grow more precise, thanks to "los progresos de la literatura, de las artes, de la sociabilidad y el comercio o recíproca comunicación de las ideas" (López de la Huerta 1789, ix–x). Capmany, not unlike the later Wittgenstein, contrasts the authority of the academic dictionary with close observation of the use which speakers make of words in their everyday conversation: the "regla sabia del uso," he says, "nos dará la particular y propia definición" of every word (Étienvre 1983, 268).

The question of governing the language, and of controlling political language in particular, is an extremely delicate one during such a time of constitutional change, where new legislation is to be designed. In the eyes of many, the constitution was seen as the political "tablas de la ley," or even as a real "gramática de la libertad" (Fernández Sebastián 2012a, 270, 277). On the eve of the crisis in 1808, Santiago Jonama emphatically claimed that "el *uso común*," i.e. "[el] convenio de los hombres sobre el sentido de cada voz [. . .] debe ser la norma del lenguage" (Jonama 1836, 21; 25–26). And furthermore, in a display of radical 'linguistic contractualism,' so to speak, he added that "[l]a norma del lenguaje es el uso del día," since "es claro que si el convenio de la multitud pudo formar el lenguaje, el mismo convenio podrá reformarlo, desusando unas voces, inventando otras nuevas, limitando o extendiendo la acepción de las ya conocidas, y aun mudándola enteramente. Por eso mi norma no será precisamente el lenguaje que hablaron Herrera y Garcilaso, sino el que hoy hablan Meléndez y Moratín" (Jonama 1836, 27–28).

Such opinions, which bore a striking similarity to the political debates of the day, as those debates focused on the suitability of rewriting Spain's historical constitution or establishing a new constitutional code, were to be reinforced just two years later. It was not in vain, as many eyewitnesses corroborated and as general historiographical opinion would later agree, that the undoubted protagonist of the insurrection in 1808 was "la nación en masa:" the starring role in that drama, in such extreme circumstances, was undoubtedly played by the Spanish people (Costa 1992, 151). While the aristocracy, high-level functionaries, and cultured élites were amenable to collaboration – with varying degrees of enthusiasm – with the government of José I (who had taken up the throne at the wish of his brother, the Emperor, after he had overthrown the legitimate Bourbon dynasty), the lower classes instead chose rebellion against the French, thus bringing about politicization on an enormous scale, which, in the name of

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wounded patriotism, "trocó el Gobierno español en popular" (Alcalá Galiano 1955, II, 463). As Galiano saw, in those first days of the uprising, Spain effectively became a fully fledged democracy: the power vacuum caused by the *vacatio regis* was immediately filled by the people, and even at times by the lower classes, who took charge of the destiny of the country in the face of the desertion of a large section of their ruling classes, the *afrancescados*, who transferred their allegiance to Napoleon (Alcalá Galiano 1955, II, 46).

Against this background it is easier to see why not only the resulting constitution, but also the spheres of politics and culture gave a pre-eminent role to the Spanish people. At a time when, as Donoso wrote, "toda la nación era pueblo" (Donoso Cortés 1970, I, 246–251; Fuentes 1988), and every institution, from suffrage to the army, was throwing open its doors to the most populous levels of society, control over the language could not be an exception to this trend. Nor was it. The idea that it was "el convenio de la multitud," to use Jonama's formula, which was responsible for making and unmaking the meanings of words was the predominant feeling among the Spanish *literati* over the following years.

However, this "gobierno popular de la lengua" was open to two different interpretations. For conservatives and traditionalists, the principle implied that no one had the authority to twist received meanings, in current use by the majority of the population, in order to impose new meanings on words. The "diccionario de los demagogos" was not to take priority over the "diccionario del pueblo" (Donoso Cortés 1837; Fernández Sebastián 2012a, 256–257). On the other hand, particularly progressive liberals emphasized the contractual/voluntarist facet and had no hesitation in actively promoting reconceptualizations; they would go as far as subverting inherited meanings or the assessment of certain fundamental concepts to advance their political agenda of reform. In these cases, as has been shown previously in the example of "patria," half-forgotten layers of meaning in old Greek and Latin words were available to be reactivated in certain pragmatic situations. Thus newly sharpened, these terms could be wielded in debates with political adversaries, and proved to be incisive weapons in the cut-and-thrust of the early nineteenth century parliament and media.

A significant number of these same liberal authors, who followed the epistemological sensationalism espoused by Locke, Condillac, and the *idéologues*, even cherished the goal of establishing a perfect language, whose definitions were clear, stable, and precise. They believed that this would settle many political disputes. During the second constitutional period (1820–1823), Alberto Lista and the moderate journalists at his side continued to aspire towards fixing the "verdadero significado" of each political term once and for all, believing that errors caused by "la mala inteligencia de las palabras" were much to be lamented. "Si fuera posible," they continue, "que todos los hombres diesen el mismo valor a las voces, es decir, expresasen con cada una de ellas una misma idéntica idea, se acabarían para siempre las disputas, y no habría en el mundo más que una sola opinión" (*El Censor*, November 8, 1821).

Fighting for the dictionary

We have now come to terms with the fact that politics and rhetoric are inseparable, and so such disputes are impossible to resolve. However, this was not the prevailing view of early nineteenth-century Spain, among either reformists or conservatives.

The War of Independence (1808–1814) offered a good opportunity for pre-liberal groups, who were unsatisfied first with Godoy's government and then with that imposed by Napoleon, to put their planned reforms into action.

From the earliest days of the uprising, the notions of "independencia" and "libertad" went hand in hand in many texts produced by the rebel faction. For those early liberals, expelling the

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intruder king, Joseph Bonaparte, was not enough. Instead, they had to go one step further and put an end to "despotismo ministerial," by constructing a new regime which included a written constitution, with a division of power and a series of rights and freedoms. And many of them believed that this was the inevitable consequence of a profound reform of political language.

However, not all those who fought against the French shared the same opinion. More conservative groups among the rebels, who supported the traditional monarchical order, fought valiantly against the positions of those who argued for constitutionalism. It was this which, especially after the meeting of the *Cortes* in Cádiz, led to a kind of literary-political war being waged in addition to the war against the French invader (the latter in turn being a war which presented certain features of civil strife, given that a number of Spaniards, particularly civil servants and members of the élite, supported the invading French); and this literary-political war split the anti-French side. Although there are various shades of nuance among the different groups who fought these ideological battles (for which the major battlegrounds were the political press), there were two essential distinctions: firstly, the line which divided the so-called "afrancesados" from the "patriotas" (who saw the former as traitors); and secondly, among patriots, liberals were starkly distinguished from absolutists, whom liberals pejoratively labelled "serviles."

Given that this ideological battle between these three principal factions – "afrancesados," "patriotas," and "serviles" – was fought above all over semantics, and the leaders of those factions were usually men of letters, we may say that each party possessed not only its own related periodicals, but also its own lexicon (and its own anti-lexicon). Indeed, much ink was then expended on the publication of various *sui generis* dictionaries, whose authors – beneath the cloak of anonymity – maliciously included a series of pseudo-definitions of dozens of key words, and attributed them to their adversaries. While various conservative authors, including the politician Justo Pastor Pérez or the friar Luciano Román (who also translated the work of Lorenzo Thjulen), satirized the "nuevo vocabulario filosófico-democrático" of the "lengua revolucionaria" of the "nuevos filósofos," others, such as Bartolomé J. Gallardo, took the opposite view, fighting fiercely against the "diccionario del fanatismo" and exalting the "idioma de la libertad," the language which constituted the real "diccionario de los hombres libres" (see Álvarez de Miranda 1984; Fernández Sebastián 2012a, 260ff.; Gallardo 1811; Pastor Pérez 1811; Seoane 1968; Thjulen 1813).

Nor were *afrancesado* publicists slow to enter this ideological struggle. The pages of the official press of Joseph Bonaparte's regime, composed under the direction of José Marchena, contain several sardonic jokes directed against the "diccionario de la revolución," including a series of words with false and disparaging definitions which took as their target the "patriotic" guerrillas, reframing them as revolutionaries who deceive the people and "excitan a la rebelión" (see *Gazeta de Madrid*, September 28, 1811; *Gazeta de Oficio del Gobierno de Vizcaya*, October 11, 1811). At exactly this time, in the city of Cádiz and safe from French troops, the respective authors of the *Diccionario razonado-manual* and the *Diccionario crítico-burlesco* were embroiled in bitter disputes over the contradictory meanings which were variously assigned to the terms "patriota" and "patriotismo" (see Gallardo 1811, 27–29; 116; Pastor Pérez 1811, 52–55).

This three-sided conceptual struggle between liberals, absolutists, and Bonapartists, which extended to the definition of several dozen key words, bears eloquent testimony to the importance taken on by this lexical field in the Spain of the early nineteenth century.

One clear symptom of the profound transformations which Spanish society underwent during that era, beginning in the last third of the eighteenth century, is the drastic change in the use of the phrase "sociedades patrióticas." While in 1770 this label was used to designate

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the *sociedades económicas* stimulated by the government, by 1820, "sociedades patrióticas" instead meant active political clubs inspired by the most radical fringe of liberalism (see Gil Novales 1975). The intense politicization of the years 1808–1814, and especially of 1820–1823, explains such a dramatic shift in meaning, as the leap is made from forms of conviviality more typical of the Enlightenment and the pleasant gatherings of notable members of rural and provincial society, to the bustling new centres of a liberal kind of conviviality, whose political meetings took place in the foremost cafés of most cities. The half-hearted "patriotismo" of the eighteenth century, conceived in essentially economic and patrician terms, was expanded in 1808 to include a much more passionate, political, and plebeian patriotism – a new patriotism which in 1820 was to become markedly liberal. In this light, it is revealing that during the Liberal Triennium, the areas of Spain with the highest number of periodicals that included the term "patriota" in their title were Catalonia and the Basque Country, two areas with a budding bourgeois population. All the indications are that almost a century before the rise of sub-state "nacionalismos" in these parts of the country, liberal Spanish patriotism was a sentiment felt with particular fervour among the urban middle classes in Basque and Catalan cities (see Fernández Sebastián 1991, 272ff, especially 277–278 and map 2).

From the recovery of Spanish independence to the invention of liberalism

It seems clear, however, that the movement from a predominantly economic agenda to the proposal of constitutional reform was a gradual one. Indeed, in the work of such essayists as Cabarrús or Arroyal, it is no easy task to determine where economics end and political aspirations begin. Moreover, as the eighteenth century moved into the nineteenth, "política" "politics" was generally held to refer to a combination of political economics and public law (see Fernández Sebastián 2013b). Indeed, in some authors' work, the shift was almost imperceptible as they moved from the request for economic improvements to the demand for a constitution as the only guarantee of citizens' rights, liberty, and property (see Portillo Valdés 2007, 2010).

The enormous weight given to the emerging concept of independence in the wake of the crisis of the Spanish monarchy was linked almost from the outset to the demand for a constitution (see Fernández Sebastián 2013a). It is no coincidence that Article 2 of the Constitution of Cádiz (and that of several Spanish American constitutions, following the Cádiz model) proclaimed the nation's sovereignty and independence, not only from any foreign power, but also from its own legitimate kings: "la Nación española es libre e independiente, y no es ni puede ser patrimonio de ninguna familia ni persona." In this sense, the liberal revolution in Spain, and Hispanic revolutions in general, might be characterized as a series of movements which linked the fight for liberty to the affirmation of the sovereignty of the people – or rather, the sovereignties of the peoples, where each city or local community may constitute a separate *pueblo* (see the articles in Ferreira 2009; Goldman 2014; San Francisco 2014). In sum, then, all those revolutions in the Iberian Atlantic between 1810 and 1825 may be seen as one great "revolución de independencia," which led to the dissolution of the two imperial monarchies. And the term "independencia" was to remain a fundamental political watchword throughout the nineteenth century: at different junctures during the revolution, Spanish liberals would again repeatedly invoke the independence of Spain as one of their primary political goals.

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To conclude, I would like to draw attention to two little-known aspects of the liberal revolution in Spain, which are of some interest from a linguistic and cultural point of view. The first of these is an internal, local feature; the second has a more external, global relevance.

Firstly, Hispanic reformers worked hard to make sure that the principles of constitutionalism were known both in the regional languages of Peninsular Spain and in Amerindian tongues. Secondly, those *liberales* were the first to be referred to as such, both in Europe and in the world as a whole.

The proselytizing zeal of the leaders of the Spanish Revolution explains their systematic recourse to all forms of political propaganda. As well as the polemical dictionaries mentioned previously, and all kinds of pamphlets, periodicals, songs, images, and symbols, those early liberals published several political catechisms, and had no hesitation in adapting any genre or format to help serve the purpose of legitimizing the new regime which they sought to implement. Once again it became clear that the transformations in the printed matter made available to the public, and the semantic alterations at the level of individual words, were processes that were far from independent of each other. This, then, is further testimony, if such were needed, that modern intellectual historians have much to learn from specialists in cultural history and the history of the book, and vice versa (see Fernández Sebastián 2012a, 269–274).

Various translations into languages other than Castilian, with a greater or lesser presence in the Hispanic world, likewise testify to this determination to see the constitutional message reach every corner of the realm, especially during the 1820s. There is no doubt that the translators of those texts were the same men that had given all they could in a cause which was ultimately to prove impossible: transforming the Spanish imperial monarchy into a multiethnic, constitutional nation. Moreover, since this objective implicitly required turning the overwhelming majority of adult males – including the American aboriginals – into citizens, by a process similar to the evangelizing efforts of three centuries earlier, the "missionaries" of this new "constitutional Gospel" made every effort to translate their fundamental precepts into the vernacular languages of the New World. A leaflet published in Mexico, for example, entitled *La Malinche de la Constitución*, summarized the contents of the 1812 constitutional text in Nahuatl and Spanish, and we know that several partial translations of that same constitution were made in Mesoamerica, "en lenguas como el quiché y otras mayas" (Clavero 2000, 87; 332–333). According to one observer, these attempts at indoctrination were not in vain: the 1812 constitution did indeed profoundly alter the political language of the natives (see Clavero 1995, 2000, 307; Sierra O'Reilly 1955–1957, vol. 2, 67).

In the metropolis, too, where languages other than Castilian were spoken, it was necessary to overcome linguistic barriers. Works such as *Jaquinbide Iritarautia Españiaco Neurquidaren*, an 1820 Basque translation of a widely known Spanish constitutional catechism, stand as evidence of their authors' desire to propagate modern ideologies – in this case liberalism – in a rural environment where orality was still the norm (see Amundarain 1820; Gallastegi Aranzabal 2009; Ibisate 1994).

* * *

As will have been noted, most of the vocabulary of that nascent political modernity is composed of familiar words with revised meanings. However, those crucial years also saw the birth of a set of neologisms. Perhaps the most significant of these is "liberalismo," especially if we keep in mind the brilliant future which the following two centuries held in store for this, the first of the political – *ismos*, and the true herald of the ideological era.[2]

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Whatever term we apply to it, this emerging ideology, political system, or movement, which was still not yet fully formed, and whose ideological traits look somewhat confused and ill-defined from our modern perspective, was given precisely this name of "liberalismo" at the *Cortes* of Cádiz. That was where, in late 1810, a group of young European and American constitutionalist parliamentarians were christened "liberales," for having the word "libertad" constantly on their lips during their impassioned speeches.

From that Andalusian city on the Atlantic coast, the political epithet "liberal" – as well as other related, but less common, expressions, such as "partido liberal" and "liberalismo" – spread rapidly to other cities on the Peninsula, and soon afterwards to the rest of Europe and America. There is some evidence to show that texts published in England, France, Germany, and the United States initially used the Spanish spelling of the word, or in any case employed it to make reference to the Hispanic liberals (see Fernández Sebastián 2006, 2012b).

During the 1820s, when the words "liberales" and "liberalismo" – already recognizable from Cádiz to St. Petersburg, from Boston to Santiago de Chile – started to become common currency on the other side of the Atlantic, the countries and languages of Iberia again played a decisive role in this step-change from regional to global significance. The aftereffects of these constitutional experiences were felt far away from the Peninsula, far away from Europe and from America. If the news and new languages reached the Philippines via the usual colonial routes, a more complicated course also took them to the Indian subcontinent. In Calcutta, the founder of Indian liberalism, Rammohan Roy, held several public celebrations in honour of the Iberian revolutions of 1820–1823, enthusiastically acknowledged the restoration of the Constitution of Cádiz, and was the recipient of a copy of that same legal text, with a dedication written in Spanish which included the word "liberalismo" (see Bayly 2007, 26–28; Collet 1962, 161–163).

It is therefore no surprise that until the eve of the French Revolution of 1830, the word "liberalismo," little used at the time, remained much more common in Spanish than in any of the other principal languages of Western Europe (see Figure 24.1):

Liberalismo had originally been considered by its enemies to be a kind of ideology, a party or a political-religious sect that pertained strictly to Spain, if with foreign roots (see *El Sensato*, July 1, 1813); however, from the 1820s, Spanish sources began to view it as a European, or even Euro-American phenomenon, which seemed destined to spread across the entire world.

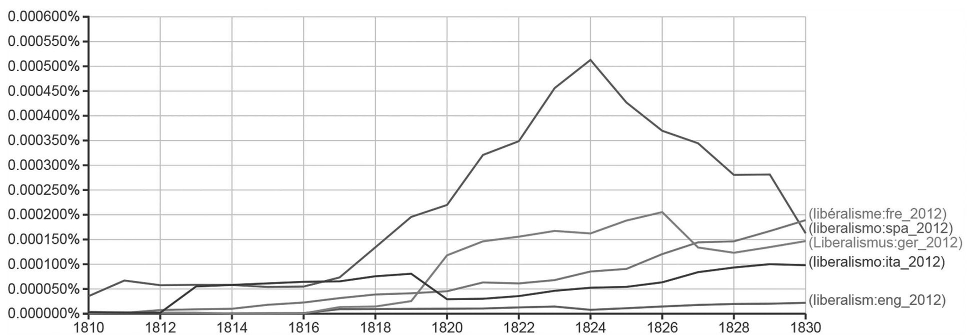

Figure 24.1 Relative frequency of the use of the term "liberalism" in five European languages, 1810–1830.

Source: Google Ngram Viewer, July 25, 2014.

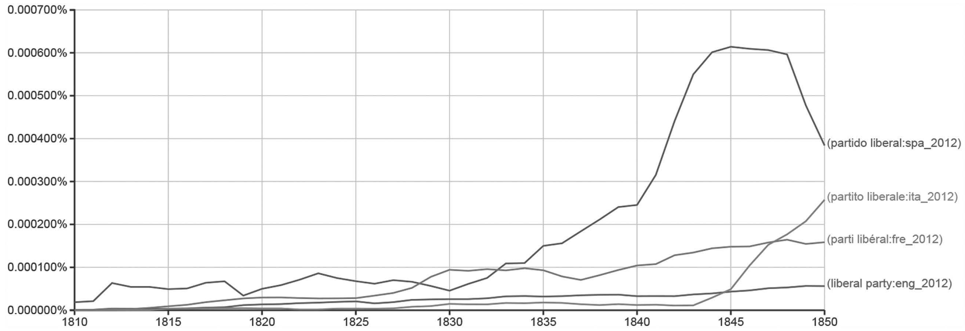

Figure 24.2 Relative frequency of the use of "liberal party" in four European languages, 1810–1850.
Source: Google Ngram Viewer, July 25, 2014.

Despite such universalizing designs, during the first half of the nineteenth century, and especially the decade of the 1840s, the likelihood of the phrase "partido liberal" appearing in a work composed in Spanish was considerably higher than that of finding an equivalent phrase in texts published in French, English, or Italian (see Figure 24.2):

In light of the data presented in the figures, it is surprising to note that nowadays Hispanic liberalism, historically the first liberalism to exist anywhere in the world, occupies an almost insignificant place not only in the classical manuals of Western liberalism used in British and North American universities, but also in much specialized historiography. How are we to explain this blind spot in intellectual history? As well as the familiar issue of Anglocentrism, part of the problem here is doubtless the strange silence resulting from the focus on a small canon of "great authors" in traditional histories of political theory – among which, of course, there is not a single figure who wrote in Spanish or Portuguese.

For my part, I am less interested in the works and authors of the classical canon than in the social transmission and circulation of concepts, and so my historical focus tends more towards languages than "theories," looking at how words are used rhetorically rather than at ideas in an abstract sense. From this perspective, Spanish liberalism – or, to be more precise, the liberalisms of Spain and Latin America – become once again a subject of great interest. In particular, they retain the interest which always pertains to the ways in which a society perceives itself in its own time; that is, to how a society's members seek solutions to their problems, debate them amongst themselves, and respond to the collective challenges with which they are presented.

As far as Spain is concerned, we have seen that during the later eighteenth century and the early nineteenth, the political language used by Spaniards underwent a period of profound renewal. Following the loss of almost all her American territories, Spain became a second-tier European power. The old monarchy which spanned two hemispheres was thus reduced to a nation-state of moderate size, which was fundamentally peninsular. At the same time as its lands were dramatically diminished, the country also began a period of intermittent political and constitutional revolution, which was only to reach a certain level of stability once the first third of the nineteenth century had passed, with the definitive triumph of representative government which would last for the remainder of the century. Paradoxically, significant changes to the array of concepts upon which the new institutions were built did not only affect Peninsular Spain: following a trajectory which ran parallel to that of the old mother-country, the young republics which had been separated from the monarchy (and here the same may be said

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of imperial possessions in Brazil, in reference to the Kingdom of Portugal) similarly renewed their political vocabularies during the first half of the nineteenth century, which quickly allowed the creation of a repertory of concepts that typified modern politics, and which were common to the rest of the Western world, although subject to differing interpretations. The *Iberconceptos* project attempts to chart the varying evolution of a set of twenty of these fundamental ideas which helped to open up Iberian paths by which modernity might be reached (see Fernández Sebastián 2009, 2014).

Notes

1 A different issue, though still associated with the fixing of meaning, is the question of who can provide models of writing and eloquence.

2 I leave aside *patriotismo*, a word already formed during the eighteenth century, and some other, minor –*ismos*, in particular those linked to the French Revolution, such as *jacobinismo*.

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