Spanish challenges and European dilemma: Socialising the debate on the integration of immigrants

Ricard Zapata-Barrero

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ABSTRACT

The point of departure for this article is that the European debate on immigration is incomplete. The assumption is that integration involves two parties: the host society and the immigrants. I bring in a third party - the citizens, who must also integrate themselves into the newly emerging multicultural societies. In other words, not only societies but also citizens need to be multicultural. Using a case study of riots in southern Spain's El Ejido in February 2000, the author draws implications for a wider European debate which links immigration, identity and security to the discourse of populism and xenophobia.

I. Introduction

The European debate on the integration of immigrants now has a very long history. It began at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, when states realised that many immigrants stayed on, instead of returning to their homelands.[1] The point of departure for this article is that the European debate on immigration is incomplete. The assumption is that integration involves two parties: the host society and the immigrants. I bring in a third

party - the citizens, who must also integrate themselves into the newly emerging multicultural societies. In other words, *not only societies but also citizens need to be multicultural.*

The purpose of this article is to examine these arguments adopting a contextual approach.[2] In the present context, the El Ejido riots will be used as a paradigmatic case study through which to illustrate a complex structural interplay between discourses of rights and discrimination. The overall framework of the discussion rests on the evidence that the link between immigration, identity and insecurity is one of the major driving forces behind populism and xenophobia.

2. The context: Spanish practical challenges

During the second half of the 1980s and the 1990s immigration in Spain raised keen interest, although only in relatively restricted circles. The debate was inspired by the fact that Spain was experiencing a demographic transformation: from a country of emigration to a country of immigration. Currently, at the beginning of the new century Spain is witnessing another unprecedented qualitative change within these migratory dynamics. Immigration now belongs to the political and social agenda.[3] In practical terms, El Ejido marks the beginning of this shift. Following the general framework of my argument, it can be considered as one of the first events of this decade that underlines the theoretical dilemma facing Europe in dealing with the integration debate.

2.1. *El Ejido: The 'discovery' of immigration in Spain*

El Ejido was, for three days (5-7) of February 2000, the scene of Spain's first collective conflict with direct political and social consequences. Spain had never known social troubles of this sort. El Ejido is nowadays considered as a point of reference that marks a watershed in the debate on immigration in Spain. This unrest forced Spanish society and polity to consciously face up to and formulate its *immigration problem.*

In spite of the arguments in the post-El Ejido literature that the riots could have been predicted, their extent and violence could not have been foreseen. Never before had a similar event attracted such media coverage.[4] The Hobbesian

panorama of an urban war, social chaos and barricades without any police control invaded the front pages and TV programmes. Even CNN highlighted the *three days of February*, and the media from the 'other side of the Mediterranean', Morocco, spoke of 'Maurephobia', 'apartheid', and even 'ethnic cleaning'.[5] The title of the European Civic Forum's report sums up the situation: El Ejido: a land without law (*El Ejido: tierra sin ley*). This influential report goes as far as using the expression 'pogrom' to describe the riots.[6] Others defined the events as the most deplorable racist act in Europe since the Second World War,[7] and finally, still others emphasised that the troubles put aside forever the myth that 'Spanish people were not racist'[8] and that racism was a disease of other countries but not of Spain. The paradox of the situation is that most of those who suffered injuries were also the most integrated (members of associations, shopkeepers, or simply common Moroccan residents).[9]

Three years later, El Ejido is still used in public debates as an example of the basic danger to be avoided; it is present in the mind of people and actors as *the* extreme undesirable situation. It is viewed as a paradigm and a point of reference of uncontrolled urban social and ethnic conflict; as a negative myth and as a symbol of lack of integration. Nowadays El Ejido is used semantically to qualify authoritative arguments in debates on immigration, integration and multicultural citizenship. Let me first introduce the main contextual variables to explain what happened and why Moroccans were the main ethnic group to be targeted.

2.2. *The three days of February 2000 which disenchanted Spain*

El Ejido is a market-gardening town (*ciudad-cortijo*) in the province of Almería (Andalusia), in southern Spain (*Poniente de Almería*). It was created very recently (1987), mainly as a result of an accelerated process of economic growth organised on a family basis around intensive agricultural development (vegetables grown 'under plastic' - the so-called *invernaderos* or greenhouses).

El Ejido is one of the areas of Almería with the largest cultivated and productive surface area. It had 53,220 inhabitants in 2000, of which 4,695 (8 percent) were legal immigrants, 3,473 of these being from Morocco. However, the majority of immigrant workers are not documented. Recent reports estimate that almost 70 percent of the immigrant labour force are undocumented.

Contrary to intuition, the productive system of greenhouses is one of the characteristics of the late capitalist economy.[10] We can say that this is a case of modernity in economic production but of traditional (mediaeval, I would say) methods as regards labour conditions. El Ejido has one of the highest levels of income per capita in Europe together with the presence of undocumented immigrants;[11] it is also a market-gardening town with one of the largest number of banks and Mercedes cars per capita.[12] Socially, there is little cohesion and there is almost 50 percent illiteracy among the local population. The inhabitants have experienced very rapid social, demographic and economic transformations and constant regional planning changes.[13] This economic growth is inevitably linked to the increasing presence of immigrant workers with sub-standard labour and housing conditions, living in improvised shanty towns.

The objective fact that triggered the social explosion was the murder of a young Spanish woman (Encarnación López) by a mentally unbalanced Moroccan immigrant on 5th February 2000. Two weeks earlier, two farmers had also been killed, supposedly by a Moroccan immigrant (the facts were never clarified, but the force of rumour played an important role). After the very rapid snowball effect of the news, collective revolts began. At first, this took the form of occupying the main road into El Ejido and streets in the city centre, and burning pictures denoting the Moroccan presence. During the next seventy two hours, large numbers of enraged groups of locals armed with stones, knives, sticks, iron tools and bats assailed most of El Ejido's public spaces in an improvised and enraged 'caza al moro' ('Moor hunt'). Given the seriousness of the incidents, the Government Delegate (the representative of central government in Andalusia) went to El Ejido with 150 police officers. According to accounts by Moroccan immigrants and some reports by NGOs,[14] instead of calming and controlling the situation, the presence of the government representative served to provoke further violence, while the police looked on passively.

Even during the funeral of Encarnación López, on the next day (6th February), in the presence of local and governmental authorities, a group of those attending cried 'death penalty for the murderers', and xenophobic slogans were also voiced. The violent atmosphere grew, reaching its peak with insults directed towards the Deputy Government Delegate and against the NGOs,

including one of the main organisations supporting immigrants through welfare work, Almería Acoge. Governmental and other authorities were forced to quickly abandon the meeting, pursued briefly but hotly by the irascible inhabitants. At that moment, a general wave of violence against any physical or material manifestation of the presence of Moroccans began without control of any sort. The mosque, butchers' shops, bars, restaurants, telephone boxes and cars were the object of violence and other outrages. Even journalists covering the events, NGOs and anyone suspected of being an 'ally of the immigrants' were categorically attacked. NGO offices were burned. One of the paradigmatic pictures summing up the situation was of groups of locals on the backs of lorries, armed with knifes and carrying petrol, going to immigrant shanty towns, burning and destroying the few possessions that the undocumented workers had. Some terrified immigrants spent several days hiding in the countryside. During the night of 6-7 February, a large amount of xenophobic graffiti appeared on immigrant's houses and shops. In spite of the gravity of the events, only twenty two people were injured. Likewise, the imbalance in the arrests illustrates how political constraints dominated the events in the last resort: only seventeen Spanish (none remaining in jail at the time of writing) and 25 Moroccan citizens.

This picture of an uncontrolled local population persecuting Moroccan immigrants (the majority working for them), the acquiescence of the police force, the political autism of the local authorities and the social lenience of governmental actors invite us to pose many questions. The first intuitive ones are: Why and how could these events happen? What effects and consequences could these riots have from a political and social point of view? There are also other normative questions that deserve special attention, such as those relating to the limits of social cohesion, stability, collective violence and ethnic conflicts. Others cover political and cultural aspects: Would these riots have happened if the immigrants had been registered, and worked and lived in a dignified fashion? Is there any relation between this ethnic conflict and the construction of the reality of immigration by the media[15] which constantly link immigrant contexts with insecurity and depict the arrival of immigrants as a cultural invasion? How did such xenophobic behaviour find its legitimating basis? What are the limits of the racialisation of social relations?[16] Can we explain El Ejido in terms of socio-economic factors only, or do we need ethnic and cultural ones? Where are the limits of ethnic, territorial and social

segregation? Can political authorities manage these conflicts without taking into account electoral constraints? The best way to analyse the arguments relating to these questions is to examine the main speeches of the leading actors involved in these events.[17]

2.3. *'Speech acts' of the main actors*

In spite of the clarity of the pictures illustrating the events of El Ejido, a brief account of the reactions of the main actors lead us to the conclusion that we are facing a *social situation with several political interpretations*. This first observation has not to be taken as an argument for legitimating violent behaviour such as that experienced in El Ejido. We assume that in dealing with such contexts of conflicts, objectivity has to be the orientation and aim of the analysis. My first step is therefore to examine the various interpretations that guided the actions of the main actors. Linguistically, we can say that we are faced with a shared empirical social fact - El Ejido - with many semantic political meanings, some of them incommensurable.

The day after the February riots ended, a special committee was formed to examine the situation, the *Mesa para la Integración Social de los Inmigrantes* or Committee for the Social Integration of Immigrants. The report they prepared was very general and abstract, without any concrete instruments to control incidents. Ambiguity of the declarations was the keynote. The only specific decision-making they consented to was to increase the police presence to ensure security and stability. The seriousness of the xenophobic conflict and the proximity of the general elections were determining factors in explaining why the political parties were so 'prudent' in their public approach to the events. They tried to make political declarations without injuring the different and opposite sensibilities. The most prominent public actor, Juan Enciso, mayor of El Ejido, belonging to the right-wing Popular Party (PP, Partido Popular), the same party that was and still is in power in central government, refused to be present, in spite of being specially invited. He permanently acted as a 'blockage actor'[18] to any consensual initiative. Juan Enciso publicly supported violent people and he came to bear the main responsibility for the attacks by legitimating their behaviour. The speech and action of this 'populist' actor were radical and decisive. He implicitly justified riots with the argument that the presence of immigrants generated insecurity.

Therefore, some radical reactions of the population were 'understandable'. Even the Spanish president, José María Aznar, expressed his understanding of Mr Enciso, arguing that it is difficult to have a solid opinion if one doesn't live there. Only one member of the central government, the Minister of Employment and Social Affairs, Manuel Pimentel, adopted a clearer position against the events in El Ejido and in favour of the integration of immigrants, answering the mayor by saying that he cannot attract immigrants to work there by denying them minimum rights. Mr Pimentel's discourse, linking events with a lack of integration policy, was very distant from that of the other official actors. He resigned some weeks later.

In general, then, public authorities, political parties, managers of the Administration and other political representatives had a very prudential reaction when approaching the situation publicly. As there was a social fracture between 'allies of the immigrants' and 'sympathisers with the locals', public actors attempted to 'put out the fire' between the two sides. This could take the form of the physical presence but passivity of the representatives of law and order. Most of the literature shares the argument that one of the most important explanatory factors of this ambiguity was the proximity of the general elections and the public debate on the need to reform the existing Aliens Law, in terms of the concession of rights and admission criteria, among other items. El Ejido cannot be interpreted without these contextual and structural elements, as will be analysed below.

These events gave rise to a tense atmosphere within the Moroccan government and public opinion managers. For example, the Moroccan Foreign Affairs Ministry created a 'crisis cabinet'. Most of the Moroccan media shared the view that their people were unsafe in Spain, persecuted by citizens with the tacit encouragement of public authorities. In general the discourse was guided by the need to establish trust, cohesion and union between Moroccan immigrants and citizens. The condemnation of racist and xenophobic actions was unanimous.

At the European Union level, the president of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, reacted immediately, affirming that the events were opposed to EU principles. These declarations were very important both for their content and because they broke the neutral trend of the European Commission in treating issues considered as internal and home affairs concerns. On 17th

February the European Parliament passed a resolution denouncing the unacceptable labour conditions of Moroccan immigrant workers in El Ejido. This was the second time that it condemned racist actions and ethnic conflicts (the first was in 1992, against the attacks in Rostock and Lichtenhagen, in Germany).

Many Moroccan workers and their families, frightened by the violence and arbitrariness of the incidents, took the exit option. Others opted for a general and indefinite strike protesting against the racist attacks and their working and living conditions. One of their main social concerns was to demonstrate that they were not delinquents, that they were also victims of some Moroccan people. That insecurity has to be connected to the unstable and irregular situation of immigrants and not simply immigration. Large demonstrations and huge rallies in the streets of El Ejido, with a strong security system, followed these strikes. One of the most important immigrant associations active in the area, ATIME (*Asociación de Trabajadores Inmigrantes Marroquís en España* or Association of Moroccan immigrant Workers in Spain), took control of the situation and promoted a meeting with the majority of actors (trade unions, NGOs and employers' associations) in order to negotiate the end of the general strike. This meeting only reached some agreements with employers on labour conditions, but not on other important issues such as the regularisation of undocumented workers, compensation for material destruction, and the improvement of housing conditions. In fact, these meetings only served to calm the tense and violent atmosphere. Finally, the actors reached an agreement in the presence of the Government Delegate of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, the Confederation of Employers of Almería, ATIME, the main employers' associations and the trade unions of Almería. On 14th February the immigrants went back to work.

2.4. *El Ejido, a bridge between the general elections and the reform of the Aliens Law*

This section could also been entitled *the political instrumentalisation of El Ejido*. I will argue that we cannot understand the whole picture of El Ejido without taking into account at least three structural factors: the beginning of the electoral campaign, the recent passing of an Aliens Law (December 1999, viewed by most government MPs as a victory of an opposition alliance), and the beginning of a regularisation process for undocumented immigrants set-

tled in Spain. These three facts play a pivotal role in our understanding of the social events in general, and the political prudence of the main official actors in particular.

As pointed out earlier, the only common arguments of official and public actors were linked to the preservation of law, public order, and the status quo; that is, they were guided by the principles of stability and security. Having an open and progressive reaction was interpreted as synonymous with loss of votes. In this sense El Ejido could also be viewed as the first social phenomenon in which the link between the political management of a conflict involving immigration and elections is obvious. Likewise, there can be no doubt that the events were interpreted as the final phase of an internal governmental debate on the Aliens Law voted by Parliament in December 1999 (known as Law 4/2000), which took effect on February 1st, that is, scarcely four days before the beginning of the riots. The importance of El Ejido cannot be detached from these debates, which had provoked intense coverage in the media and social cleavages. These two structural elements (the proximity of the general elections and the will of the government to reform the recent law) must also be accompanied by a third element: Spain was entering a period marked by a regularisation process, which meant political conflicts between actors, the sight of enormous queues at the Government Delegation (the state administration in charge of managing this 'amnesty'), the action of Mafias and those who benefit from these policies, social conflict related to the issue of security, and so on. Regularisation processes invariably have very dramatic connotations.

Taking these structural variables, some interpreted the riots as the necessary conflictive atmosphere needed to justify legislative change, as this effectively occurred after the events, with the passing of a more restrictive Aliens Law in August 2000 (now known as Law 8/2000). This debate illustrates the confusion that reigned during this period and the incapacity of the main decision-makers to cope with situations of such sensitive and emotional social impact.

The argument we are developing here is, then, that there is an apparent link between El Ejido and the process of legislative and political change.[19] It is only within this context of structural change that we can understand El Ejido. This connection was even made by J. Enciso, the mayor of El Ejido, in local

and national media. The only way to solve problems, to avoid, in his own words, 'the entrance of more shameless persons', is to 'reinforce borders and increase the means of security',[20] that is, the two main issues leading the debate in Spain.

Following the same line of reasoning, we can say that El Ejido is the first social conflict to introduce the issue of immigration into the political agenda in a second way: political declarations during the events were ambiguous and unclear, as I have underlined. This is a factor that should be taken into account, and a constant at election time.

The electoral profit that was to be gained through El Ejido is clear. If we compare the results of the general elections in 1996 with those of 2000, which took place on 12th March, that is, one month later, the increase of the PP in Spain generally and in El Ejido in particular is simply enormous.

	PP Results (General Elections 1996) (%)	PP Results (General Elections 2000) (%)	Difference 1996-2000 (%)
El Ejido	46.2	63.6	+ 17.4
Spain	38.6	44.2	+ 5.6

How can we interpret this PP victory in El Ejido (an increase of more than 17 percent!) Simply, citizens expressed their support for the ideas and actions of its Popular Party mayor, Juan Enciso, who supported the rioting and described it as 'understandable behaviour' considering the situation of increasing insecurity and delinquency. The populist management of the conflict by Juan Enciso won the day, outweighing all other social actors and having undermined all attempts at negotiation and progress towards a peaceful outcome. We can learn from these facts that the PP capitalised on what in other European countries is giving force to extreme-right and racist political parties. The events of El Ejido must be understood within the broader context of the issue of immigration in Spain. The debate was promoted by the Popular Party itself. Its strategy included linking the events with the reform of the two-month-old Aliens Law, by arguing that this law was too benevolent to

immigrants and was therefore acting as a magnet (or an *efecto llamada*), accompanied by the use and abuse of the argument that the Tampere Summit forced Spain to be more restrictive (something which was obviously false but that public opinion believed without, surprisingly, any counter-argumentation by other actors).[21]

To sum up the core argument, El Ejido was, once politically instrumentalised, the most convenient fact to force the interpretation that these racist events were indeed the consequence of the permissiveness of the recent law. These arguments and the political use of El Ejido worked very efficiently, since a few weeks later, during the election campaign, J.M. Aznar introduced the 'El Ejido argument' as the main illustration of the *efecto llamad'*. The events of El Ejido were then used as a legitimating principle for changing the legal framework. This reform was taken as one of the main topics of the party's programme. The PP resorted to using the elections as a referendum in favour of its restrictive immigration policy. Never before in Spain had a political party made use of immigration issues during the electoral campaign. The new law (8/2000) was passed in December 2000 and came into operation on 23rd January 2001. Under this new law, the undocumented are effectively without any rights, even the right of demonstration, association, membership of a trade union, and the right to strike. The undocumented could truthfully be called the 'rightless', the 'new *misérables*'. Likewise, as they are subject to immediate expulsion, the new law has even created a new category of immigrant, not so much the 'undocumented' but rather the, let us say, 'expellable', that is, those undocumented that have been 'detected' by the authorities, but that remain in Spain within a process of expulsion, which for many of them is never actually executed because of the absence of bilateral agreements with their home country, or simply for economic reasons, among other obstacles.

3. Basic Premises Framing the Debate on Integration: the European Theoretical Dilemma

From the beginning we are assuming that *the presence of conflict between citizens and immigrants is the basic contextual means to identify relevant issues concerning the debate on integration.* What can we learn from the analysis of El Ejido? How can the analysis of El Ejido contribute to the integration debate?

I will organise the answers to these questions by outlining the basic premises that can be drawn from the analysis of El Ejido, that is, those propositions framing the debate on integration.

Taking El Ejido as a case study, we can make at least three basic assumptions that help to frame the debate on integration. These premises may be excessively obvious in their form, but what matters is their content. The debate on integration is often accompanied by the terms 'complex' and 'structural'. But what does all this mean? In discussing these matters, even such controversial terms as 'integration' are taken for granted. But what are the basic pillars of integration? Are there one or many languages of integration? The main northern European literature dealing with these issues uses a logic of argumentation based on the concepts of minority and majority. Our case study show us that there is another language, previous to this one, that better describes the events in El Ejido. This is the language of inclusion/exclusion. I would even maintain that this is the basic logic we must consider in dealing with these matters in the southern European states, those that have recently, during the 1990s, become countries of immigration. The difference of issues between the south and the north of Europe, between the new countries of immigration (Spain, Italy) and the countries with a long tradition of immigration (France, UK, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium) is increasingly obvious and deserves in-depth comparative work. My brief analysis only allows me to propose arguments that would support this line of research.

Let me introduce these three premises separately: A) the premise of complexity, B) the premise of the context of structural change, and C) the premise of basic pillars and discourses of integration.

A) *The premise of complexity: joint problem-solving*

Ordinarily, we use the word 'complexity' to refer to something that is so complicated or intricate as to be hard to understand or deal with. Here, however, when we talk of 'complexity' we want to emphasise that to understand El Ejido we have to take as our unit of analysis not one part but the interconnection of several elements. In the context of El Ejido, 'complexity' means a multiplicity of aspects involving the *management of conflicts of immigration and conflicts deriving from it*.[22] We are looking at what the network literature designates as *joint problem-solving*.[23] This basically means that disputes between

actors are centred on how to identify the *problem* and what *joint* means in practice. The basic challenge of joint problem-solving is that it requires a minimum consensus and therefore mutual adjustment of the perceptions of representatives from different configurations. To understand the 'complexity premise' let us examine what *problem identification* and *joint* mean here.

The first and (to my mind) most important phase is the identification of the joint problem. As we can infer from the above analysis, we can identify three types of problems. El Ejido can be interpreted as a socio-economic problem, as an ethnic or cultural one, or as a human rights and legal problem. El Ejido categorically mirrors one of the most flagrant expressions of inequality, namely social and economic exclusion, separation, segregation from the general body of society. Some do not hesitate to refer to apartheid and social harassment,[24] inasmuch as the prohibition of access to bars and other public spaces was practised without any political or administrative intervention.[25] The precariousness of the situation of immigrants in El Ejido bring us to speak of them as the new *misérables*, the products of a system in the sense that the political sphere denies them even the protection of human rights, as we will see below, and that this situation helps to sustain the system itself.[26]

The basic task of joint problem-solving is to articulate the main characteristics of the problem at hand. This first component is important because an awareness of the identification of a problem often contains clues that can lead to its solution. This premise also tells us that disputes between actors reveal that they do not identify the same practical problems in the same terms. We are thus dealing with issues that cannot be explained by a single factor but many factors, or the interrelation of several factors. What we can learn from our case study of El Ejido is therefore that the difficulty in interpreting conflicts involving immigration is related to difficulties in articulating the identification of the main problem.

Secondly, but equally importantly and related to the above, 'complexity' also means that the solution of the problem is not in the hands of a single actor, but must be the result of a network of actors. The analysis of El Ejido shows us the difficulty of managing a framework that consists of a network. It is only by adopting this network approach that we can analyse complexity. I am aware that this second part of the premise (*joint* problem-solving) involves many changes in the debate on integration. The most basic one is to abandon

the assumption that the management of these conflicts can only be solved by politicians and the representatives of the state. These official actors are only one part of the network. There are also, as we have seen through our analysis, social, economic and private actors that come to the fore and have a decisive influence in the process of framing the problem. The literature of complex network analysis should thus be introduced into the debate on integration.[27]

B) *The premise of the context of structural change*

El Ejido is a paradigmatic case of a context of structural change. Basically, this means that although the events surprised everybody, when carefully analysed they are more than just conjuntural. The riots must be viewed as the result of a political and economic system that tends to promote, implicitly at least, the exclusion of immigrants from the current trend of society. Immigrants cannot benefit from a context of choice;[28] they are in the context of necessity. The violence of El Ejido also has to be interpreted as an expression of resistance to inescapable social change in society. As we have seen, this resistance took the shape of racism and xenophobia. This is the departure point for inferring that the focus to be adopted by multicultural citizenship must emphasise that we are dealing with *problems of structural change.* In other words, the debate has to assume the premise that *our traditional political structures (i.e. the nation-state) need to be modified.* Debates ought to take this premise as given and on this basis discuss the procedures for controlling this structural change. This premise helps us at least to understand why ethnic conflicts such as El Ejido can arise.[29] Undesirable social conflicts are intrinsic to social change.

This premise of structural change also highlights that we are actually discussing an unavoidable historical path. The 'resistance' of our political structures and society to the pressures resulting from the constitution of a multicultural society are understandable, since we know that any modification will have direct effects on our way of life and our thought paradigms. However, it is also true that the *conservative approach* (that which takes an assimilationist line, resisting structural change) is merely delaying something that by simple historical logic will have to occur (and indeed is already happening in most of our public spheres): the inclusion of resident immigrants in the *public* mainstream of our societies. Any persistence of 'parallel worlds' will

produce divisions in society and political instability, which in turn will produce undesirable effects such as social racism, the formation of parties driven by anti-immigrant rhetoric, and the consolidation of anti-system movements, to name just the most extreme of the possible scenarios that our case study of El Ejido enables us to envisage. This link between immigration, identity and insecurity as the core motor nourishing populism and even the formation of xenophobic parties has never been so serious. At this juncture, we have to make clear that within the debate on multicultural citizenship, populism does not solve problems, but constitutes one of the problems to be solved.

C) *The premise of basic pillars and discourses of integration*

Following the basic literature on integration and multiculturalism,[30] one of the most important premises we can infer to analyse the incidents in El Ejido is that we are dealing with an extreme case of lack of integration. From our case study we can categorically affirm that the basic conditions for integration are legal recognition, work and housing, that is, socio-economic aspects and rights prevail over cultural and ethnic conditions. Of course, I am not suggesting that when an immigrant is documented and has a minimum of work and housing conditions, he is automatically integrated. What we are stressing is that without these minimum conditions integration is simply impossible. It is from this perspective that El Ejido must be interpreted. It forces us to think seriously about the *sine qua non minimum conditions* without which integration is simply impossible. Taking a *reductio ad absurdum* approach, we can argue that *El Ejido teaches us what integration is not, and what the consequences of a lack of integration policies can be*. Without a minimum distribution of rights, work and housing, there is no decent life. Therefore, rights, work and a home become the basic pillars of integration. El Ejido is an extreme case of abuse of human dignity, of human and social exclusion. And obviously, living on the margin means isolation and exclusion from the law.

Likewise, in dealing with ethnic conflicts we can adopt two types of discourses which reflect different contexts. In congruence with what I have argued above, the first one is the *discourse of access to rights*, the second one the *discourse of discrimination*. El Ejido enables us to argue that the discourse of rights precedes the discourse of discrimination. This means that those

engaged in the first discourse must be aware that the access to rights is not *the end* but *a condition* of integration. The majority of actors and analysts treat El Ejido within this 'rights' discourse. They assume that in acceding to basic rights immigrants will be integrated.[31] Northern European cases show us that there is another discourse that prevails, the discourse of discrimination.[32] Our case study of El Ejido provides analytical tools for understanding the importance of this difference.

Schematically:

Discourse	Logic	Foundation	Context
Discourse of rights	Inclusion/Exclusion	Rights-based	Different systems of rights
Discourse of discrimination	Minority/Majority	Identity-based	Same system of rights

El Ejido is a clear example of lack of rights. Strictly, the nature of the grievance is not discrimination but segregation. The basic difference between these two discourses is straightforward. The discourse of rights follows a logic of inclusion/exclusion; the discourse of discrimination, a minority/majority logic. This distinction can only be made by analysing the context. The *discourse of rights* supposes that the basic factor explaining ethnic conflicts is that immigrants and citizens do not share the same system of rights; to be more precise, that immigrants do not have certain rights that citizens enjoy. This difference of rights is the cause of concern, and therefore the unit of analysis for constructing arguments. In contrast, the *discourse of discrimination* takes for granted that the integration debate is not rights-based but identity-based. This means that even if foreigners gain access to voting rights, discrimination prevails. They come up against greater difficulties as regards their expectations and destiny, and constraints that are beyond their control, such us skin colour, nationality, physical appearance. To take a radical example, skin colour should not be a reason for a distinction in class mobility.[33]

4. Conclusions: Spanish challenges and European dilemma

From the contextual analysis of El Ejido we can draw two main conclusions. One concerns explanatory factors, the other the effects and consequences. On

the one hand, El Ejido opens the political debate on undocumented immigrants; on the other hand, El Ejido cannot be wholly understood without taking into account its electoral effects. To conclude, I will argue that both of these issues should be read not only from the Spanish point of view but also from the European one. As I said at the outset, El Ejido has to be interpreted as one of the first *European dilemmas in this first decade of the 21st century*.

First of all, the basic challenge of El Ejido is a political problem, concerning undocumented immigrants. This issue is the most flagrant illustration of the subordination of the market logic to the political one.[34] In terms of problem identification we can say that El Ejido is first of all a *distribution of rights* problem (legal recognition and human rights protection), followed by one of *cultural and ethnic discrimination* (racist and xenophobic singling out), and last but not least, an issue of *socio-economic inequalities* (social, urban and work segregation). However, I reiterate, my whole argument is that the best way of interpreting the El Ejido riots is to articulate all three aspects. This is, I would say, the *Spanish challenge*. How can these three aspects be managed without undesirable effects such as the conflict I have examined? When we speak of undocumented immigrants we are also directly concerned with human rights and security issues. This link is neither socially nor politically recognised. According to the latest estimates, there are three million undocumented immigrants in Europe, and that means three million people lacking human rights, living in an 'insecure world'. Given this situation, it is difficult for governments to defend the argument of human rights in foreign policy without fulfilling it at home. Their 'Janus morality' is simply incoherent and hypocritical. When El Ejido is described as a legal problem, even by those who justified the events,[35] or have 'an understanding view' of the riots, in the words of J.M. Aznar, the president of the Spanish central government, we have to take these arguments to their ultimate consequences: that this is indeed a problem of human rights, that the basic problem of undocumented immigrants is a *European human rights* problem.

Secondly, El Ejido poses many normative questions for the integration debate in the context of elections. As is obvious, immigration management has a direct impact on the electoral results and consequently on the party system. As I have tried to show, the general elections, one month after the events, benefited the party (the Popular Party) who had 'an understanding attitude'

towards those who organised the riots. The fear of electoral consequences also plays an important role in the negotiation process, as illustrated by the prudence of action and the abstraction and ambiguity of declarations of political representatives. What can we learn from this point of view? That immigration management has an electoral cost, and that this premise acts as a major restraint in any peace process that is initiated in an attempt to deal with ethnic conflict.

Both of the above theoretical conclusions have to be interpreted not only in the Spanish context but in the European one. Basically, this means that El Ejido must be seen as a European problem. This was indirectly expressed by the very prompt official intervention of Prodi, contrasting the incidents with EU principles. At this level we can say that El Ejido reflects the lack of a *European culture of integration*, that is, that in the argumentation of the management of conflicts deriving from immigration, the European integration debate must be premised on the complexity of structural change and on the discourses of rights and discrimination. *El Ejido is one of the first ethnic conflicts to put on the European agenda the problem of how to administrate undocumented immigration socially and politically, and how to control this management to reduce its political and electoral effects.* To conclude the argument, El Ejido is an example of how the integration debate is lacking in principles by assuming that it is a game of two players only: immigrants and the host society. The argument here has been that there are many actors and at least two recipients: immigrants and citizens. Without multicultural minds, the so-called multicultural society is condemned to practical failure and destined to remain mere academic rhetoric.

Notes

1 R. Zapata-Barrero, *El turno de los inmigrantes: esferas de justicia y políticas de acomodación* (Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales/IMSERSO, 2002).
2 J. Carens, *Culture, citizenship, and community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
3 By way of illustration, at the public opinion poll level, in February 2001 the issue of immigration reached third position in the problems that concern the Spanish

public (with 31.1 percent), after unemployment (66.8 percent) and terrorism (65.2 percent). See Centro de Investigación Sociológicas (CIS) (*Encuesta Barómetro de Febrero 2001, Estudio 2409*, www.cis.es).

[4] An analysis of newspapers covering the first three months of 2000 estimates that out of the entirety of news on immigration in the Spanish written media, around 25 percent dealt with the events in El Ejido. See Fundación CIPIE, *Inmigración y Racismo: análisis de radio, televisión y prensa española* (Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales/IMSERSO, first trimestre, January-March, 2000), (www.imersomigracion.upco.es).

[5] M. Lorenzo Villar, 'El racismo visto desde la otra orilla. Los acontecimientos de El Ejido en la prensa marroquí', *II Congreso sobre la Inmigración en España* (Madrid, October 5-7, 2000, www.imersomigracion.upco.es).

[6] Foro Cívico Europeo, *El Ejido, tierra sin ley* (Comité Europeo de Defensa de los Refugiados e Inmigrantes, 2001).

[7] SOS Racismo, *El Ejido: racismo y explotación laboral* (Barcelona: Icaria, 2001), pp. 12-13.

[8] F. Checa, 'Introducción: Qué ha pasado en El Ejido?', in F. Checa (ed.), *El Ejido: la ciudad-cortijo* (Barcelona: Icaria, 2001), pp. 11-29.

[9] P. Pumares et al., 'El futuro del Poniente Almeriense: situación, actitudes y perspectivas tras los acontecimientos de febrero de 2000', *II Congreso sobre la Inmigración en España* (Madrid, October 5-7, 2000, www.imersomigracion.upco.es), p. 8.

[10] U. Martínez Veiga, *La integración social de los inmigrantes extranjeros en España* (Madrid: Trotta, 1997) and U. Martínez Veiga, *El Ejido: discriminación, exclusión social y racismo* (Madrid: Catarata, 2001).

[11] Checa, 'Introducción', p. 25.

[12] Fundación CIPIE, *Inmigración y Racismo*.

[13] A. Castaño, 'Una sociedad ahogada en un 'mar de plásticos': factores precipitantes de una persecución étnica', *II Congreso sobre la Inmigración en España* (Madrid, October 5-7, 2000, www.imsersomigracion.upco.es).

[14] See, for example, the report published by Almería Acoge in A. Puertas, *Un caso de racismo: El Ejido* (Almeria Acoge, 2000) and the special report by SOS Racismo, *El Ejido*, as well as its Annual Report in SOS Racismo, *Informe Anual 2001 sobre el racismo en el Estado Español* (Barcelona: Icaria, 2001).

[15] J.P. Alvite (ed.), *Racismo, antirracismo e inmigración* (Donostia: Tercera Prensa Hirugarren Prentsa, 1995).

[16] On the 'racialisation of relations', see M. Wieviorka, 'Racisme, racialisation et eth-nicisation en France', *Hommes et Migrations* (February), 1996, pp. 27-33 and the analysis made by A. Rea, *Jeunes immigrés dans la cité* (Bruxelles: Éditions Labor, 2001).

17 I will consider these actions as *speech acts* (J.L. Austin, *How to do things with words*, Oxford University Press, 1962), that is, in keeping with our approach, acts which provide us with meanings and arguments that can contribute to the debate on multicultural citizenship.

18 C.J.A.M. Termeer and J.F.M. Koppenjan, 'Managing perceptions in Networks', in W.J.M. Kickert, E.-H. Klijn and J.F.M. Koppenjan (eds.), *Managing Complex Networks: strategies for public sector* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), pp. 79-97.

19 This argument counteracts in part the main thesis of V. Giraudon, *Les politiques d'immigration en Europe. Allemagne, France, Pays-Bas* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001): that political discourse and reforms before elections could have negative electoral repercussions, and that the main immigration reforms are made after elections. I say *in part*, because her explanatory model could illustrate the *north* of Europe, but not the *south* of Europe or countries that have recently joined the club of states having a tradition of immigration. This note could also serve to stress the importance of taking care, at least linguistically, when speaking of Europe, when in fact we are speaking of the north of Europe (Germany, France, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Belgium and so on).

20 Quoted by A. Garzon Morales, 'Informe sobre los sucesos xenófobos en El Ejido', (April 29, 2000), *Webjournal zum Flüchtingskongress vom 21. April bis 1. Mai in Jena*, www.nadir.org/congress/2000/04/24/11.html.

21 R. Zapata-Barrero, 'The limits of a multinational Europe: democracy and immigration in the European Union' in F. Requejo (ed.), *Democracy and National Pluralism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 128-154, and R. Zapata-Barrero, 'Fundamentalismo estatal de la UE en torno a la inmigración', *Afers Internacionals/ Cidob*, 53, 2001, pp. 149-176 (forthcoming an English translation in *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 2003).

22 B. Ghost (ed.), *Managing migration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and R. Koopmans and P. Statham (eds.), *Challenging Immigration and Ethnic Relations Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

23 Termeer and Koppenjan, 'Managing perceptions', p. 84.

24 SOS Racismo, *El Ejido*, p. 13.

25 E. Massey and N. Denton, *American Apartheid* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

26 M. Walzer, *Spheres of Justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 83.

27 Among others, see E.H. Klijn, 'Analysing and managing policy processes in complex networks', *Administration and Society*, 28 (1), 1996, pp. 90-119, Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan (eds.), *Managing Complex Networks*, P. O'Toole, 'Treating networks seriously', *Public Administration Review*, 57 (1), 1997, pp. 45-52, and P.A. Sabatier (ed.), Theories of Policy Process (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999).

28 Carens, *Culture, citizenship, and community*, pp. 69-73.

29 On the issue of El Ejido as an ethnic conflict, see, among others, T. Calvo Buezas, 'España 2000: Narciso descubre su trasero en El Ejido', *Inmigración y racismo. Así se sienten los jóvenes del siglo XXI* (Madrid: Cauce editorial, 2000), pp. 15-57, Pumares *et al.*, 'El futuro del Poniente', Castaño, 'Una sociedad ahogada' and Checa (ed.), *El Ejido*.

30 R. Bauböck, A. Heller and R. Aristide (eds.), *The challenge of diversity. Integration and pluralism in societies of immigration* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1998), A. Favell, *Philosophies of integration. Immigration and the idea of citizenship in France and Britain* (London: MacMillan, 1998), R. Kastoryano, *Quelle identité pour l'Europe? Le multiculturalisme à l'épreuve* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Politiques, 1998), C. Joppke (ed.), *Challenge to Nation State. Immigration in Western Europe and the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), C. Joppke and S. Lukes (eds.), *Multicultural questions* (Oxford University Press, 1999), W. Kymlicka and W. Norman (eds.), Citizenship *in diverse societies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), B. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 2000), I.M. Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Carens, *Culture, citizenship, and community*, R. Zapata-Barrero, *Ciudadanía, democracia y pluralismo cultural: hacia un nuevo contrato social* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 2001), R. Zapata-Barrero (ed.), *Ciudadanía e interculturalidad: balance y perspectivas para el siglo XXI, Revista Anthropos* 191, 2001, Zapata-Barrero, *El turno de los inmigrantes*, M. Wieviorka, *La différence* (Paris: Éditions Balland, 2001), B. Barry, *Culture and equality: an egalitarian critique of multiculturalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

31 See an attempt to make a theoretical and empirical analysis in Zapata-Barrero, *El turno de los inmigrantes*.

32 This is the language we know from the Amsterdam Treaty (art. 13). It is also the basic language of the American multicultural debate (see, for example, N. Glazer, *We are all multiculturalist now* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

33 E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein, *Race, nation, class: ambiguous identities* (London, New York: Verso, 1991), J. Spinner, *The boundaries of citizenship: race, ethnicity and nationality in the liberal state* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), E. Balibar, *Droit de cité: culture et politique en démocratie* (Paris: Editions de l'Aube, 1998).

34 On the relationship between the market/political orientations of immigration policies, see, among others, J.F. Hollifield, *Immigrants, markets, and states* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), W. Schwartz (ed.), *Justice in immigration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), P. Cole, *Philosophies of exclusion* (Edinburgh University Press, 2000), R. Zapata-Barrero, 'Justicia para inmigrantes: mercado y política de extranjería', *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, 2000, 90, pp. 159-181, R. Zapata-Barrero, 'Justice and immigration: an argument against

nationality as 'cement' of citizenship', in F. Dallmayr and J.M. Rosales (eds.), *Beyond nationalism? Sovereignty and citizenship* (New York/Oxford: Lexington Books, 2001, pp. 253-265, M. Martiniello, *La nouvelle Europe migratoire* (Bruxelles: Editions Labor, 2001).

[35] One of the latest provocative books justifying the riots claims as its main argument that El Ejido was not an ethnic conflict but a laboratory of integration, taking into account the factors of volume (the large number of immigrants) and time (the majority of them are newcomers). See M. Azurmendi, *Estampas de El Ejido: un reportaje sobre la integración del inmigrante* (Madrid: Taurus, 2001), pp. 287-288. For this author, recently appointed president of the *Immigration Forum* (the government forum involving the main social, political and economic actors), the main problem is therefore not immigration but irregularity and human rights (Azurmendi, *Estampas*, p. 332). It is not racism, as has been assumed by the main literature.