The "Discovery" of Immigration in Spain:
The Politicization of Immigration in the Case of El Ejido

Ricard Zapata Barrero
Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Spain)

During the second half of the 1980s and the 1990s immigration in Spain raised keen interest in relatively restrictive circles (the administration, associations, academia, etc.), who shared the opinion that "Spain was experiencing a demographic trans-formation, turning from a country of emigration into a country of immigration". As we enter the 21st century it is witnessing another important qualitative change. The issue is no longer a matter of administrative and "technical" concern, but political parties and society in general have begun to take it seriously. At the beginning of this decade, then, this topic has become a "cuestión de Estado" (Raison d'État).

A general overview based on relevant events over the period 1999-2001 shows us how immigration has definitively entered the social and political agenda. The purpose of this article is to examine the impact of this migration dynamic through a case study: the riots that took place in a market-gardening town in southeast Spain, El Ejido, in February 2000. Of all social events, El Ejido is the one that has played a pivotal role in framing the political and social debate, since it synthesises the main issues reflecting the Spanish management of immigration. These events have been the subject of many articles and books offering different and controversial inter-pretations. With El Ejido, Spain "discovered" immigration and began to undertake the formulation of its immigration issue. This is why it is worth focusing on this case study. The main questions I will pose are: what can we learn from the Spanish context? How can the contextual analysis of the El Ejido case study contribute to the debate on multicultural citizenship in Europe? My reasoning will move from the analysis of the particular context to subsequent theoretical reflections. In the concluding remarks I will summarize the main arguments challenging Spanish management of immigration two years after El Ejido.

Au cours de la seconde moitié des années 1980 et des années 1990, la question de l'immigration en Espagne a soulevé un grand intérêt dans certains cercles rela-tivement réduits (l'administration, les associations, le monde universitaire, etc.). Ceux-ci partageaient l'opinion que l'Espagne était touchée par une transformation

démographique et passait d'un pays d'émigration à un pays d'immigration. En ce début du XXIème siècle, le pays est témoin d'un autre important changement qualitatif. Cette question n'est plus seulement une préoccupation administrative et «technique». Désormais, elle est prise sérieusement en considération par les partis politiques et la société en général. Au début de cette décennie, l'immigration est devenue une "cuestión de Estado" (Raison d'État).

Un survol des événements les plus pertinents ayant eu lieu pendant la période 1999-2001 nous montre comment l'immigration est entrée définitivement dans l'agenda politique et social. L'objectif de cet article est d'examiner l'impact de cette dynamique migratoire à travers une étude de cas: les émeutes qui ont eu lieu dans une ville vivant d'agriculture dans le sud-est de l'Espagne, El Ejido, en février 2000. De tous les événements sociaux, El Ejido est celui qui a joué un rôle déterminant dans l'encadrement du débat politique et social, puisqu'il synthétise les questions les plus importantes quant à la gestion de l'immigration en Espagne. Ces événements ont été le sujet de nombreux articles et livres offrant des interprétations différentes et controversées. Avec El Ejido l'Espagne a «découvert» l'immigration et a entamé la formulation de la problématique de l'immigration. C'est pourquoi il est utile d'approcher ce sujet à travers cette étude de cas. Les principales questions que nous nous poserons sont: que peut-on apprendre du contexte de l'Espagne? Comment cette analyse contextuelle du cas de El Ejido peut-elle contribuer au débat sur la citoyenneté multiculturelle en Europe? Notre raisonnement se déplacera de l'analyse du contexte particulier vers des réflexions théoriques qui en découlent. Dans les remarques finales, nous résumerons les principaux arguments qui remettent en question la gestion espagnole de l'immigration, deux années après El Ejido.

The Spanish Context in 2000-2001: The Inclusion of Immigration on the Political and Social Agenda

During the second half of the 1980s and the 1990s immigration in Spain raised keen interest in relatively restricted circles (the administration, associations, academia, etc.) that shared the opinion that Spain was experiencing a demographic transformation, changing from a country of emigration into a country of immigration. As we enter the 21st century Spain is witnessing another important qualitative change. The issue is no longer a matter of administrative and technical concern but political parties and society in general have begun to take it seriously. At the beginning of this decade, then, this topic has become a *cuestión de Estado* (Raison d'État).

A general overview based on relevant events over the period 1999-2001 shows how immigration has definitively entered the social and political agenda.[1] An out-of-control mob persecuting their Moroccan neighbours (Terrassa, Barcelona, July 1999), the traffic accident at a level crossing involving a van carrying illegal immigrant Ecuadoran farm labourers, 12 of

whom died (Lorca, Murcia, January 2001), and the lock-ins in churches and hunger strikes demanding documentation (Barcelona, February 2001) are some of the social episodes that put immigration on the political agenda. Almost all these incidents were related to socioeconomic inequalities and class conflict, racism and xenophobia, ethnic discrimination, and even segregation, but one issue stands out as particularly pressing: all were related to access to basic rights and the broad question of undocumented people. One of the first pictures that comes to the average citizen's mind when asked about immigration is that of the *pateras* (the boats that cross the 14-km Straits of Gibraltar carrying Moroccan or Sub-Saharan people) without documents.

The purpose of this article is to examine the effects of this migration by means of a case study: the riots that took place in a market-gardening town in southeast Spain, El Ejido, in February 2000. Of all social events, the incident in El Ejido played a pivotal role in framing the political and social debate because it synthesized the main issues of Spanish management of immigration. These events have been the subject of many articles and books offering varying and controversial interpretations. With El Ejido, Spain "discovered" immigration and began to undertake the formulation of its *immigration issue*. This is why it is worth focusing on this case study.

The main questions I ask are: What can we learn from the Spanish context? And how can the contextual analysis of the El Ejido case study contribute to the debate on multicultural citizenship in Europe? My reasoning moves from analysis of the particular context to subsequent theoretical reflections. In the concluding remarks I summarize the main arguments challenging Spanish management of immigration.

From a Particular Context...

El Ejido: The Three Days of February 2000 That Disenchanted Spain
El Ejido was for three days (5-7) in February 2000 the scene of the first collective conflict in Spain with direct political and social consequences involving coexistence between immigrants and locals. Never before had such an event attracted such media coverage.[2] The Hobbesian landscape of an urban war, social chaos, and barricades with no police control was shown on front pages and in described leading articles and prominent radio and television programs. Even CNN highlighted the *three days of February*, and the media from the "other side of the Mediterranean, "Morocco, spoke of "Maurephobia," "apartheid," even "ethnic cleansing."[3] The troubles put

aside forever the historic myth that "Spanish people were not racist"(Checa, 2001), that racism was a disease of other countries, but not of Spain.

El Ejido is a market-gardening town (*ciudad-cortijo*) in the province of Almería (Andalusia) in the southeast of Spain (*Poniente de Almería*). It was created recently (1987) mainly as a result of an accelerated process of economic growth organized on a family basis around the development of intensive vegetable-growing under plastic (*invernaderos* or greenhouses).

A brief description of El Ejido follows. It is a part of Almería with the largest productive surface area. In 2000 most of the immigrant workers were Moroccan, and almost 70% were in an irregular situation. Contrary to what one might think intuitively, the productive system of greenhouses is one of the characteristics of the late capitalist economy (Martínez Veiga, 2001). Thus this is about modernity as regards economic production, but tradition as regards labour conditions. El Ejido provides some symbolic data that speak for themselves and combines several surprising variables. The town has one of the highest incomes per capita in Europe, together with the presence of undocumented immigrants, social segregation, and conditions on a par with the fourth world (Checa, 2001). In the context of global competitiveness and European market restrictions, the only way for farmers to reduce costs is to cut wages and avoid social security payments by employing undocumented workers. Socially, illiteracy is almost 50% among local families. It is also a market-gardening town that has one of the largest number of banks and Mercedes cars per capita (Fundación CIPIE, 2000). The inhabitants have experienced rapid social, demographic, and economic transformations and continual regional planning changes (Castaño, 2000a). This economic growth is inevitably linked to the increasing presence of immigrants with substandard working and housing conditions, living in improvised shantytowns.

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 February 5, 2000. The news spread rapidly, and collective riots 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 72 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 spontaneous and enraged *caza al moro* (a pejorative expression meaning "Moor hunt"). Given the seriousness of the incidents, the Government Delegate (the representative of central government in Andalusia) went to the town with 150 police officers. Moroccan eyewitnesses and some reports by NGOs claimed that instead

of calming and controlling the situation, the presence of the government representative served to spur on the violence while the police looked on passively.[4]

During the funeral of Encarnación López the next day, the violent atmosphere worsened, and the attending local and government authorities were forced to abandon the funeral. At that moment, a general wave of violence against any physical or material manifestation of the presence of Moroccans became out of control. The mosque, butchers' shops, bars, restaurants, telephone kiosks, and cars were all attacked. Even journalists covering the events, NGOs, and anyone suspected of being an "ally of the immigrants" were attacked. One of the paradigmatic pictures summing up the situation was the groups of locals on the backs of trucks, armed with knives and carrying petrol, going to immigrant shantytowns, burning and destroying the few possessions of the undocumented immigrants. Some terrified immigrants spent several days hiding in the countryside. During the night of February 6, a large amount of xenophobic graffiti appeared on immigrants' houses and shops. In spite of the gravity of the incidents, only 22 people were injured. Similarly, the imbalance in arrests illustrates how political constraints dominated the events: only 17 Spanish (none remaining in jail at the time of writing) and 25 Moroccan citizens.

This picture of an out-of-control local population persecuting Moroccan immigrants, most of whom worked for them, the acquiescence of the police, the political autism of the local authorities, and the social lenience of government actors raises many normative questions related to the limits of social cohesion, stability, collective violence, and ethnic conflict. Other questions are linked to political and cultural aspects: would these riots have happened if the immigrants had been documented and worked and lived in a dignified fashion? Or the connection between these events and social and political structures: how was such xenophobic and racist behaviour justified as legitimate What are the limits of the racialization of social relations?[5] One question in particular captures our attention: Why were the authorities so passive; why were the political actors so ambiguous? To theorize the context I introduce the principal arguments about the reactions of leading players.

Main Arguments of the Leading Actors
The day after the riots ended, a special committee was constituted to examine the situation. Their report was general and abstract, with no concrete instruments to control incidents. Ambiguity of statements was the keynote. The only specific decision they agreed on was to increase police

presence to ensure security and stability. The seriousness of the xenophobic conflict and the proximity of 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 statements without offending different and opposite sensitivities. The most prominent public actor, Juan Enciso, mayor of El Ejido, a member of the right-wing *Partido Popular* (PP, Popular Party), which was and still is in power in the central government, refused to attend despite a special invitation. His populist speeches implicitly justified the riots with the argument that the presence of immigrants caused insecurity. He consistently blocked any consensual initiative. For the main perpetrators of the attacks, he stood as the basic point of reference for legitimizing violent behaviour. Even the Spanish President José María Aznar expressed his "understanding" and political support for the local authorities.[6]

In general, then, local and government authorities, political parties, administration managers, and other public representatives reacted prudently. As there was a social cleavage between "allies of the immigrants" and "sympathizers with the locals," public actors attempted to "put out the fire" between the two sides. This could take the form of the physical presence, albeit passive, of representatives of law and order. Most of the literature agrees that one of the most important reasons for this ambiguity was the proximity of general elections and public debate on the need to reform the existing Aliens Law because of its openness in conceding rights and admission criteria among other items. El Ejido cannot be interpreted outside this structural framework.

These events gave rise to a tense atmosphere in the Moroccan government and among managers of public opinion. 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 local citizens with the tacit encouragement of public authorities. In general the discourse was guided by the need to establish trust, cohesion, and unity between Moroccan immigrants and Spanish citizens. Racist and xenophobic acts were unanimously condemned. Even the president of the European Commission Romano Prodi reacted immediately, affirming that the events were against EU principles. These declarations were important both for their content and because they broke the neutral tendency of the European Commission in dealing with issues considered as internal affairs. On February 17 the European Parliament passed a resolution denouncing the unacceptable labour conditions of Moroccan immigrant workers in El Ejido.[7]

Many Moroccan workers and their families, frightened by the violence and arbitrariness of the incidents, left the country. Others opted for a general and indefinite strike 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. The insecurity must be connected with the unstable and irregular situation in which they lived. One of the leading immigrant associations active in the area, *Asociación de Trabajadores Inmigrantes Marroquíes en España* (ATIME), took control of the situation and proposed a meeting with the majority of actors (trade unions, NGOs, and employers' associations) to negotiate the end of the general strike. The main social actors reached some agreement with the employers on labour conditions, but not on other important issues such as the regularization of undocumented workers, compensation for material destruction, and improvement of housing conditions. In fact these meetings served only 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 foremost employers' associations, and the trade unions of the area. On February 14 the immigrants went back to work. Again, why were the government authorities so passive, why were the political parties so ambiguous? The only probable answer is that El Ejido was an "opportunity" to justify governmental legal reforms and definitively to connect immigration with elections.

The Political Instrumentalization of El Ejido in the Process of Legislative and Political Change
I argue that we cannot see the whole picture of El Ejido without taking into account at least three structural factors: the beginning of the electoral campaign and general elections (March 12, 2000); the recent passing of an Aliens Law (December 1999) viewed by the government as a victory of an opposition alliance; and the beginning of a regularization process for undocumented immigrants settled in Spain. These three factors play a pivotal role for understanding social events in general, and the political prudence of the main official actors in particular.

As we see, the only common arguments of the official 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. El Ejido was the first social phenomenon in which the link between the political management of conflicts involving immigration and elections

was obvious. Similarly, the incidents were no doubt interpreted as the final phase of an internal government debate on the Aliens Law enacted by Parliament in December 1999 (Law 4/2000), which took effect on February 1, scarcely four days before the beginning of the riots. The importance of El Ejido cannot be viewed separately from these debates. These two structural elements (the proximity of the general elections and the will of the government to reform the recent law) are also accompanied by a third element. Spain was beginning a regularization process that signalled the beginning of a dramatic situation. These were political conflicts between actors, long queues at the Government Delegation (the state administration in charge of managing this amnesty), the actions of mafias and those who benefit from these policies, social conflict related to the issue of security, and so forth.

Beyond the question of whether these incidents were politically supported, the empirical evidence is that the riots were used to justify legislative change, as this effectively occurred after the events with the enactment of a more restrictive Aliens Law in August 2000 (Law 8/2000). This debate illustrates the confusion that reigned during this period and the incapacity of the principal decision-makers to cope with such sensitive and emotional situations.

The argument developing is that of an apparent link between El Ejido and the process of legislative and political change.[8] This connection was even made by J. Enciso, the mayor of El Ejido. The only way to solve problems, to avoid, in his own words, "the entrance of more shameless persons" (Garzon Morales, 2000) is to reinforce borders and increase security, that is, the two main issues leading the debate in Spain. The link was perfectly, and politically, constructed.

El Ejido was, then, the first social conflict to bring the issue of immigration onto the political agenda. The electoral profit to be gained was clear. If we compare the results of the general elections in 1996 with those of 2000, which took place on March 12 (one month after the events), the increase of the PP at the national level (+5.6%) and in El Ejido in particular (+17.4%) is enormous.[9] How can we interpret this PP victory in El Ejido (an increase of more than 17%)? Local citizens simply expressed their support for the speeches and acts of its populist mayor. The populist management of the conflict won the day, outweighing all the efforts of those actors who were branded as "allies of the immigrants," and having undermined all attempts at negotiation and progress toward a peaceful outcome. We can learn from these facts that the PP capitalized on what in other European countries is giving power to extreme-right and racist political parties. The events of El

Ejido must be understood in the broader context of the issue of immigration in Spain. The debate was promoted by the PP itself. Its strategy included linking the incidents with the reform of the two-month-old Aliens Law, arguing that this law was "too benevolent" to immigrants and was therefore producing a "call effect" (*efecto llamada*), accompanied by the use and abuse of the European argument that the Tampere Summit forced Spain to be more restrictive (something that was obviously false, but that public opinion believed without, surprisingly, any counterargument from other actors) (Zapata-Barrero, 2003b).

To sum up, once politically instrumentalized, El Ejido was the most convenient factor to force the interpretation that these racist incidents were indeed the consequence of the permissiveness of the recent law. These arguments and the political use of the unrest worked efficiently because a few weeks later during the election campaign, J.M. Aznar introduced the "El Ejido argument," which interpreted the case as an extreme situation provoked by an "excessively open border policy." The events were used as the most evident legitimizing principle for changing the legal framework. This reform was taken as one of the main topics of the party's program. The PP went so far as to use 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 an electoral campaign.* The new law (8/2000) was approved in December 2000 and took effect on January 23, 2001. With this new legal framework, undocumented immigrants effectively have no rights, not even the rights of demonstration, association, membership of a trade union, or the right to strike.

...To a Broad Theoretical Reflection

What relevant theoretical reflections can be made in this context? I argue that beyond the most obvious interpretation of El Ejido as involving socioeconomic inequalities, ethnic conflict, and distribution of rights issues, it is also apparent two years later that the events were used as a political opportunity to criminalize an "unwanted" immigrant work force: Moroccans. A fourth interpretation arises from this contextual approach: the political selection of immigrants following a criterion of protecting Spanish national identity, reinforced by the historical background of Hispanic colonialism. I present below three common interpretations and argue in favour of a fourth.

Three Types of Theoretical Interpretation: Socioeconomic, Ethnic, and Legal
El Ejido has primarily been interpreted as the result of a combination of
three types of socioeconomic inequalities: work, urban segregation, and
social segregation.[10] The best way to summarize the precarious situation is
to quote Juan Enciso, the mayor of El Ejido, who said, "At 8 a.m. there are
never enough immigrants. At 8 p.m. there are always too many."[11] Apart
from the arrogance of this statement, it means categorically that immigrants
are welcome as workers, but are unwanted as residents.[12] Indeed most of
the work contracts were unwritten. The workplace is the only public realm
of social interaction (Castaño, 2000a). The working conditions of immigrants
were so close to exploitation that some authors maintain that El Ejido was
the result of a crisis in how labour market and power relationships were
understood (Checa, 2001): more like a master-slave relationship than an
employer-employee relationship. This means that the relationship can be
understood only in terms of political asymmetry of rights, undermining
the most elementary basic democratic and civic values. El Ejido is the ex-
pression of a model of radical laissez faire in the workplace, of a radical
negative example of liberal capitalism in the global age. Also, two other
kinds of segregation come together: urban segregation (into residential
areas and ghettos, territorially speaking, Martínez Veiga, 1997; Castaño,
2000b; Sánchez Miranda, 2000) and social separation. These conditions
did not arise spontaneously, but were brought about intentionally by the
farmers with the help of legislation and the absence of work and housing
inspections.

Beyond this social class focus, El Ejido also has another interpretation:
ethnic conflict (Calvo Buezas, 2000; Pumares et al., 2000; Castaño, 2000a;
Checa, 2001). Clearly the attacks against the Moroccans were indiscriminate.
Some who lived well integrated in the city centre and some even married to
Spanish women were also the object of violence. The paradox of the situa-
tion is that those who suffered looting and physical injuries were also the
best integrated (members of associations, shopkeepers, or simply common
Moroccan residents, Pumares et al., 2000). This apparent inconsistency can
be understood only in terms of the conflict being fundamentally ethnic.
This means that the motivation for the riots went beyond public order and
insecurity, working and housing conditions. As a result, the above social
class category can be justified only by a criterion that does not depend on
the will of the individual: that of ethnic membership. And this is the most
radical expression of discrimination. It implies that there is a fourth type of
exclusion, that is, ethnic segregation. El Ejido is thus interpreted as being
the result of a system of selection based on criteria of ethnic membership

and place of birth (Martínez Veiga, 2001). Apart from these dimensions, El Ejido could also be interpreted as connecting two aspects of racism: structural and social. That is, the racism expressed in political structures serves as a legitimizing basis for racist behaviour and action, which then justifies xenophobic attitudes. This link was made even clearer when the furious acts of the locals were reinforced and tacitly accepted by passive representatives of law and order and the ambiguous statements and acts of the principal public managers. In other words, if there is a legal framework that selects nationalities and separates people, and that distributes rights following utilitarian criteria, it is to be expected that common people with economic interests will discern within these limits political support and administrative understanding for their racist acts.

This implies, as the third main interpretation, that El Ejido is also a by-product of legal restrictions. Most of the immigrant workers in El Ejido were undocumented. It is incongruous–and in this case hypocritical–that most of them were working. The case study is, therefore, the result of the meeting of two opposing logics: the logic of the market, which attracts immigrants; and the logic of politics, which acts against their legal recognition. An analysis of this dichotomy reveals that the logic of the market always prevails (Hollifield, 1992; Zapata-Barrero, 2000; Martiniello, 2001). Outside the market undocumented people simply have no public life. This focus also highlights coexistence between immigrants and local citizens. El Ejido is a conflict of coexistence. Insecurity is always the locals' final argument. Instability legitimizes brutal acts. Evidently this main topic does not take in the whole situation, because undocumented immigrants have many more reasons to revolt than the local population. The view of El Ejido as being a conflict aiming to reinstate law and order is biased. Explanatory arguments must be addressed, that is, why do undocumented immigrants generate insecurity? We can even add that the immigrants' own insecurity is expressed by society by its nonacceptance of them. At this stage of the interpretation, one can link these matters to human rights. The connection between undocumented immigrants and human rights is neither socially nor politically recognized. In this regard, when some, even those who justified the incidents,[13] argue that El Ejido was a legal problem, we must take this argument to its logical conclusion: that the problem of undocumented immigrants is a *human rights* issue.

Considering these three types of interpretations, what are the main normative reasons for attacking such basic rights? My answer is identity, the protection of Spanish national identity against those people who come from cultures seen as impossible to integrate.

Protection of National Identity, Historical Ties and Colonial Background
Spanish national identity is currently being discussed at two levels: the del-
egation of sovereignty to the European Union and the national aspirations
of minorities such as the Basques. El Ejido introduced a third dimension
into the debate: the immigration issue (Moreras & Zapata, 2002). However,
this incorporation into the political discourse has been levelled politically
against one specific ethnic group: Moroccans. El Ejido has been symboli-
cally constructed as the extreme case of the dangers of multiculturalism.
It is multiculturalism seen in its most essentialist form (Modood, 2000),
as an example of cultural and religious incompatibility. Two years later
the situation is almost the same, but with an important difference. The
majority of workers are no longer Moroccans, but people from central and
eastern Europe. If it were just a legal problem, why replace the Moroccans
with another ethnic group? The government's reading of the events is
straightforward: religion and culture matter. It is supposed–ignoring the
Arab legacy in the Spanish identity and disregarding no fewer than eight
centuries of coexistence[14]–that the culture of Morocco is more distant than
that of central and eastern Europe. These cultural and religious criteria are
not new and have already been used for the formal selection of immigrants.
They are present not only in the Aliens Law, but also in the code for acquisi-
tion of Spanish citizenship, which gives preference to seven ethnic groups:
South Americans, Portuguese, the Filipinos, Andorrans, Equatorial Guineans,
Gibraltarians, and Sephardic Jews.[15]

Although in practice it may be trivial, symbolically it is meaningful that
Spanish identity is codified by historical debt criteria, for Sephardic Jews
were expelled from Spain at the same time as Muslims and gypsies in the
symbolic year of 1492, the official date of the beginning of the American
Conquest and the global expansion of Spanish Catholicism. The politics of
the so-called Catholic Monarchs has many elements of what today we would
call ethnic cleansing. Behind this there is also the politically constructed idea
of *Hispanidad*, developed at the beginning of the 20th century precisely to
compensate for the loss of the last colonies in the Americas (Cuba in 1898).
This idea of *Hispanidad* was also used during the Franco regime (1940-1975)
to refer to a community of people linked together by linguistic and religious
criteria. In this framework *Hispanidad* was clearly used politically to construct
a culturally homogeneous society and the discourse of exclusion.

Why this historical debt with Jews and not with Muslims? If we consider
the criteria of colonial debt, then there is no reason why Filipinos should be
included and not Moroccans, as Morocco was one of the last Spanish protec-
torates (1912-1956, until 1975 for the Spanish Sahara). Neither does it have

anything to do with geographical proximity if we compare the distance of Morocco with that of South America. Language affinity may work as a criterion if we consider the nationality preferences in the Spanish citizenship code, but it does not justify why Poles, with whom Spain has neither historical ties, language affinities, nor geographic proximity, are favoured over Moroccans in the process of recruitment of workers. The only criterion to explain this Spanish protectionism against Morocco is the bilateral conflict arising from the colonial period, because historically there has been permanent conflict between Morocco and Spain for the control of the Sahara, and the historical collective construction of the stereotype "Moor" as somebody suspicious, physically dirty and pestilential, ugly, and potentially criminal (Martín Morales, 2002; FINAM, 2002). If we accept that in any selection process there is always an evaluation and a social model, the current management of immigration contributes to build a Spanish historical memory for selecting those "good" and "bad" immigrants following one or both of the following criteria: language and/or religion. These are the two basic pillars of the Spanish discourse of exclusion.

Since El Ejido, but surely also fuelled by the events of September 11, explicit and intentional policy has favoured central and eastern European immigrants and South Americans over Moroccans. Moroccans are the most numerous foreign nationality in Spain (about 21.8% of the foreign population), followed by Ecuadorans who account for 7.6%. It is also apparent that the first bilateral agreements for sending immigrant workers were made with Ecuador and Poland. The only logical explanation for this policy is race and Christian identity, that is, the protection of Spanish identity (De Lucas 2002a, 2002b) against those viewed as potential "cultural invaders," even as a new Arab invasion (Mateo Dieste, 2002). It is indicative that the 2002 report by SOS Racismo for the first time gave ample coverage to "Islamophobia" as one of the increasing typologies of structural racism in the near future.

Concluding Remarks: How Spain Manages its New Multicultural Society

El Ejido today is considered as a point of reference that marks a watershed in the debate on immigration in Spain. Two years later El Ejido is still highlighted in public discourses as a basic danger to be avoided. It is present in the minds of people and actors as *the* paradigmatic extremely undesirable situation. Following the literature on integration and multiculturalism (Bauböck, Heller, & Aristide, 1998; Kastoryano, 1998; Favell, 1998; Joppke,

1998; Joppke & Lukes, 1999; Kymlicka & Norman, 2000; Parekh, 2000; Carens, 2000; Zapata-Barrero, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a; Wieviorka, 2001; Barry, 2001), one of the most important premises we can draw from this case study is that we are dealing with an extreme case of a lack of integration. El Ejido teaches us what integration is not and what the consequences of a lack of integration policies can be. But although we must take it into account, this is, I think, a first intuitive interpretation that can be reached without any deep contextual approach.

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, but also on socioeconomic inequalities and ethnic conflicts; on the other hand, El Ejido cannot be wholly understood without taking into account its structural framework (legal reform) and electoral effects.

First, if we consider the three principal explanatory factors (socioeconomic inequality, ethnic conflict, and basic rights), we can describe the Spanish challenge in terms of the following key question: How can these three aspects be managed without unwanted effects such as the conflict we have examined? Second, El Ejido poses many normative questions for the debate on multicultural citizenship in the realistic context of elections. Obviously immigration management has a direct effect on election results and to some extent also on the party system. As I show, the general elections one month after the events benefited the PP, which had "an understanding attitude" toward those who instigated 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 statements from political representatives. What can we learn from this point of view? We learn that immigration management has an electoral cost and that this premise acts as a major constraint in any peace process that is initiated in an attempt to deal with multicultural issues. In Spain the debate on political rights has not yet entered the social and political agenda.

But the contextual approach of this case study also shows that this structural framework and the immediate electoral effects make sense if we connect the abstract categories to their respective empirical references. With regard to the three main explanatory categories (legal, ethnic, and socioeconomic aspects), the protection of national identity by mobilizing historical ties and the Hispanic colonial background played a tacit–but in the long run explicit–pivotal role. Two years later exploitation in the

agricultural sector in southern Spain is legally controlled by a strong"temporary workers policy." Most of the Moroccan and Sub-Saharan ethnic groups have been replaced by South Americans and people from central and eastern Europe. Language and religion are the only criteria to explain this shift in immigration management. In general terms in Spain the labour market attracts immigrants, but politics selects them using colonial and national identity criteria. In the management of its new multicultural society Spain is currently at the beginning of some sort revival of *Hispanidad*.

Acknowledgment

Notes

1 By way of illustration, for the first time in 2000 the Spanish government put permanent questions about immigration into official opinion polls. This indicates not only its political concern, but also the conviction that immigration is an issue that has a structural dimension. For example, at the public opinion poll level, immigration reached third position in the problems that concern the Spanish public for the first time in February 2001 (with 31.1%), after unemployment (66.8%) and terrorism (65.2%) (Centro de Investigación Sociológicas–CIS, 2001).

2 An analysis of newspapers covering the first trimester of 2000 shows that all news on immigration in the Spanish media, about 25% dealt with the events in El Ejido (Fundación CIPIE, 2000). See also an exhaustive collection of newspaper articles on El Ejido in *Los sucesos de El Ejido: febrero 2000*.

3 For an analysis of the Moroccan media, see Lorenzo Villar (2000). The title of the European Civic Forum's report perhaps sums up the gravity of the situation: *El Ejido: A Land Without Law (El Ejido: tierra sin ley)* and uses the word *pogrom* to describe the events (European Civic Forum, 2001). Others qualified the incidents as the most deplorable racist act witnessed in Europe since World War II (SOS Racismo, 2001).

4 See, for example, the report published by the welfare labour association Almería Acoge (A. Puertas, 2000) and the special report by SOS Racismo (2001a) as well as its Annual Report (2001b).

5 On the "racialization of relations" see Wieviorka (1996) and the recent case study by Rea (2001).

6 Only one member of the central government, the Minister of Employment and Social Affairs Manuel Pimentel, took a clearer position against the events in El Ejido and in favour of the integration of immigrants, answering the mayor by saying that he could not attract immigrants to work there by denying them minimum rights. He resigned some weeks later.

7 This was the second time it condemned racist acts and ethnic conflicts. The first was in 1992 against the attacks in Rostock and Lichtenhagen, Germany.

8 On the link between political discourse and legal reforms on immigration and elections see the comparative study by Giraudon (2000). See also an overview of the whole Spanish situation in the Spanish Report for MPG, R. Zapata Barrero (2003a).

9 The results for the political party in power (Popular Party) in the last two general elections are as follows: El Ejido: 46.2% (1996) and 63.6% (2000), Spain 38.6% (1996) and 44.2% (2000).

10 El Ejido categorically mirrors one of the most flagrant expressions of inequality, namely, social and economic segregation from the general body of society. Some speak of apartheid and social harassment (SOS Racismo, 2001), as prohibition of access to public spaces (bars, schools, and shops) was practised with no political or administrative intervention (on these issues, see Massey & Denton, 1993; Young, 1999). The precarious situation of immigrants in El Ejido brings us to call them the new *misérables*, the products of a system where the political sphere denies them even the protection of human rights and that this situation helps to sustain the system itself (Walzer, 1983).

11 This is the phrase used by the SOS Racismo report (2001a) to criticize J. Enciso:"*A las ocho de la mañana todos los inmigrantes son pocos. A las ocho de la noche, sobran todos*".

12 This is the utilitarian view of immigration that exists not only in Spain, but throughout Europe: the immigrant viewed as a benefit, immigration as a commodity (Zapata-Barrero, 2000).

13 One of the recent provocative books justifying the riots (Azurmendi, 2001) claims 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 (most are newcomers). 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. It is not racism, as has been assumed by the main literature.

14 Officially, the Arab presence in Spain began in 711 and ended in 1492.

15 According to current legislation on nationality (articles 17-26 of Spanish Common Law ,*Código Civil*) most foreigners must be resident for 10 years before requesting Spanish nationality. However, this is reduced to only two years for those with a preferred nationality, and if they can claim some historical link with Spanish nationality just one year. The eight- year gap in residence requirement is a glaring example of selection following national identity. On these matters see the analysis of the Spanish legal framework in Zapata-Barrero (2000).

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