Support for Open Borders: A Case Study of Spanish Society

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Support for Open Borders: A Case Study of Spanish Society

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Abstract

In his book “The Ethics of Immigration”, political philosopher Joseph Carens argues for the rights of migrant populations on the grounds of democracy, freedom, and equality. He advocates for open international borders, focusing on democratic countries in North America and Europe. Carens compares the current international order of closed borders to feudalism and discusses various forms of privilege Westerners have, which, he says, makes those in the West complacent and unaware of the injustices from which Westerners benefit. Focusing on the case of Spain, this project evaluates public opinions on the debate over open borders. I survey the support for open borders by examining whether Spaniards support democracy and human rights. I examine support for closed borders through whether they support self-determination. Finally, I examine support for a middle ground by looking at support for refugees and other special cases of migration. This project proposes that although Spaniards are overwhelmingly accepting of democratic values and human rights in theory, the data shows a reluctance to fully accept immigrants, regardless of their education level and place of origin.

Key words: political science, Spain, public opinion, immigration, open borders, democracy, human rights, international relations
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I. Introduction

In the past 7 years or so, the world has been dealing with crises of mass migration not ever seen in history. The Syrian civil war has displaced millions of people, sending them across the Mediterranean and north Africa. Most of them have the destination of Europe to escape the violence. This has created a strain on the economies and resources of many countries, especially the ones closest to Syria. After living in southern Spain and visiting Morocco for a time, I saw firsthand the intense desire to reach the European peninsula, escalating to the point of stowing away in cars and buses across the Strait of Gibraltar to southern Spain. Most are turned away or caught before reaching Europe, but for those who do, life is just as uncertain. Border guards attempt to keep the peace, but have been accused of unnecessary violence towards would-be immigrants and refugees. Border spaces are a territory unlike any other, and it is hard to imagine a world without borders. However, some political theorists and scholars have proposed a global society without border restriction. It would require a complete paradigm shift in the current international system and immigration is still a hot button issue in other parts of the world, like the U.S.-Mexico border.

This has led me to investigate whether this theory of open international borders would be supported in Spanish society. It is one thing to hypothesize based on personal experience, but I wanted to get empirical evidence for both sides and see which had stronger support, and how people actually feel about immigration, borders, and refugees and other migrants. To do this, I analyzed several important public opinion surveys conducted in the last 10 years to understand the issue. I provide evidence for support for open borders, for closed borders (or the status quo), and for a middle ground, with only slightly more open borders than already exist. My final argument, based on the data found, is that Spanish society would not be very supportive of open
borders. Perhaps they would tolerate slightly more open borders, but the data on feelings toward immigration suggest a reluctance to accept even immigrants from other places in Europe.

II. Literature Review: The Ongoing Debate of Open Borders

The primary scholar that this project interacts with is Joseph Carens, a political philosopher who has been writing on the topic of open borders and liberal democracy for thirty years. One of his first important articles, entitled “Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders”, was published in 1987 and contained the foundational arguments on which his position of the morality of open borders. Among those are: the comparison of current citizenship privileges in Western countries to a feudalistic system, the equality of all humans in a democratic society, and the right to freedom of movement, as stated in the Declaration of Human Rights. He also touches upon the importance of social integration of immigrants and how those under state rule, whether they are there legally or not, ought to have equal rights.

He also wrote a book in 2013 entitled The Ethics of Immigration, which more broadly looks at migrant rights and only at the end does he make arguments about open borders that mimic his earlier work. The major difference between the works is that this book works within the current framework of international relations and the legitimacy of state sovereignty and their right to control immigration. Many of the arguments are the same, including, nearly verbatim, the argument that compares the privilege of citizenship to feudalism. The freedom of movement guaranteed by the Declaration of Human Rights is brought up also, and the basic equality of all people, whether they are deemed by a state as ‘legal’ or not, theoretically guarantees fair treatment and rights of people living in a country.

It is important to flesh out the major difference between the works of Carens, as it tells us something about the development of his arguments and the purpose of each work on its own. The
first article, “Aliens and Citizens”, is entirely comprised of arguments for open borders and responses to scholars on the other side of this debate. It questions the legitimacy of a state’s right to control immigration and speaks about open borders as a concept that could feasibly, far in the future, occur. Carens ends that article with the lines, “To commit ourselves to open borders would not be to abandon the idea of communal character but to reaffirm it. It would be an affirmation of the liberal character of the community and of its commitment to principles of justice” (Carens 271). By contrast, The Ethics of Immigration seeks to justify open borders, or at least less restrictive borders than are currently in place, while working within the space that maintains a state’s right to control who comes in and out of it. His belief that open borders are morally required for any state that commits itself to democratic values, but concedes that within the current international system, this is not feasible.

The argument of infeasibility is a core of the arguments on the other side of this debate. One of the first and continued critics of Carens, Michael Walzer, speaks about this and other objections to this theory. Carens addresses him directly in both texts, acknowledging his credibility on the subject while offering a rebuttal to Walzer’s counterpoints. One of the most important ideas put forth by critics is the idea of self-determination- the right of a state to determine its sovereignty and political status without interference from others. This right is guaranteed in the United Nations Charter and is a hallmark of current international law.

The article, “The Open Borders Debate on Immigration” by Shelley Wilcox, a professor of philosophy at San Francisco State University, lays out the major arguments and scholars on both sides of the debate. First is what she calls the “Conventional View”. This position is held by Michael Walzer and other scholars that defend the current system of regulated immigration and support a state’s right to control who comes in and out (Wilcox). Those who ascribe to this view
believe that political membership is a social good; therefore, members of a community should be free to distribute membership to those who share the particular values of that community. Walzer argues that if immigration were left unregulated at a national level, citizens would take matters into their own hands and start excluding people from certain neighborhoods or communities smaller in size (quoted in Wilcox). This would obviously cause chaos in certain areas and so it is easier to have a national regulation of immigration.

Additionally, in this “Conventional View” of immigration control, the state is compared to a social club. Club members select new members based on their values and how well they would fit into the culture of the group. The only difference, according to this view, is that club members do not have moral obligations to non-members like some citizens have obligations to their family members who are not citizens. Walzer argues that since distributing citizenship onto foreigners gives them a good, that the decision should be made on the principle of collective mutual aid. He says that states can give this good if the help is urgently needed and that the risks and costs associated with conferring citizenship are relatively low for the more affluent community (quoted in Wilcox). This also sets up a moderate view on refugee policies.

The “Open Borders Position”, argued for mostly by Carens but supported by others, follows this. He notes that freedom of internal movement in a state is a widely recognized right in democratic societies, and that the reasons people have for moving within a state are largely the same reasons people move across international borders. He also believes that citizenship is just as morally arbitrary as other characteristics of people like sex and race, and so using that to discriminate against people for rights and social positions for this reason is morally wrong (Wilcox). Although Carens thinks this sets up a strong presumption for open borders, he concedes that liberty should be restricted if only to preserve the interests they protect. This
means that only the strongest reasoning for controlling immigration (e.g., to protect liberal institutions) can be morally justified.

More objections follow after this position. The first objection is brought up by David Miller, who states that Carens overstates the importance of free international mobility. For him it comes down to basic versus bare interests. Basic interests are vital enough to be protected by a right (e.g., access to food), while bare interests are legitimate but less important (Wilcox). Miller goes on to say that he disagrees with Carens and thinks that free international movement is a bare interest for most, and that internal movement constitutes a basic right. International movement only becomes a basic right when those who are moving face persecution where they currently are. If people are moving just because they “want to”, he believes that the receiving state has every right to turn them away because it might not be in their interest to let certain people in their country.

Another of the more prevalent objections to the open borders is that restrictions on immigration do not clash with the idea of moral equality. Moral equality refers to the innate value of each person, regardless of any arbitrary characteristic. Michael Blake discusses this point. While he agrees with Carens that citizenship is indeed an arbitrary characteristic, he does not think that makes it morally irrelevant. Citizenship is a way for states to exercise their power, and in return for abiding by the rules set forth by the state, citizens receive certain rights. And since the state cannot enforce its rules on foreigners, therefore it does not have to offer them any rights, like citizenship and being a member of the community (Wilcox). States can still recognize that all people are equal, but still deny them a good, as stated by Walzer earlier, because they belong to a different state.
Being a primary scholar in the open borders discussion brings with it many fans of the work and many critics. Countless scholars in the field of political theory have reviewed Carens’s work, and he has responded. In addition to the major scholars noted above, Carens has been in direct conversation with other writers and professors and philosophers who have either reviewed his work or written rebuttals to some of his major arguments. There is a political blog, run by a group of academics, called *Crooked Timber* which discusses various topics, mostly from a left-leaning position. The main contributors to this blog each read Carens’ 2013 book and wrote a response to it. Carens himself was invited to respond and stay in conversation with other scholars in the field. This gives readers a more personal side of the author and understand the motivations for making certain arguments. For example, Kieran Oberman, a political science professor at Edinburgh University and political philosopher, criticizes Carens’s choice to begin his argument from the “Conventional View”, argued for by Walzer, in order to make the case for letting undocumented immigrants stay or protecting their rights. Carens responds to this idea by stating that even in the conventional view, states are obligated to protect the human rights of undocumented people. Especially in the cases of emergency, a state’s obligation to protect the human rights of those physically in its jurisdiction supercedes a state’s right to control immigration (“The Ethics of Immigration Symposium).

This is just one example of many. Another important part of this symposium was that it allowed for Carens to defend his arguments and talk more in-depth about certain issues in the book. He also talks about the process he used when crafting the book and its primary arguments. Carens states that he starts from the “ground up” in his ideas of social membership of immigrants (a point that is discussed often by other scholars). That is, he does not hypothesize a perfect society of social inclusion, but instead works with the system that already exists and argues why
they do or do not make moral sense. Another primary argument that he touches on is the idea of citizenship being a point of inequality and its comparisons to feudalism, which he had stated in previous articles. He directly states in the post, “I also acknowledge that enabling people to move may not be the best way of reducing inequalities between states, but I contend that preventing people from moving helps to sustain those inequalities and rests implicitly on the assumption that those inequalities are not wrong (“The Ethics of Immigration Symposium”). His position about open borders is meant to challenge the idea that these inequalities are not morally wrong.

III. Methods

For this project, I analyzed several public opinion surveys. The first was CIS- Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas. This survey was completed in December of 2017, and was part of a series of monthly surveys in Latin American and Spanish countries on various parts of society, politics, and economics. Another survey I analyzed was the Eurobarometer. This survey was completed in 2017 and is sponsored by the European Commission. It surveys member European Union states on various issues and EU policies. The next survey was European Social Survey. It was completed in 2015. Its questions are very similar to the Eurobarometer. Two interconnected surveys are European Values Study (EVS) and World Values Survey (WVS). The EVS was completed in 2008, and is a subset of data from the WVS. The WVS was completed in between the years 2010 and 2014. Another survey I looked at was the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). This set of data was specifically titled “National Identity III”, and was completed in 2014. The final survey I analyzed was Latinobarómetro. It is similar to the Eurobarometer, but it only surveys countries in Latin America and Spain. It was completed in 2013. The number of respondents varied for each survey, and for the various questions asked by
each survey group. I have noted the specific numbers in the ‘Analysis and Findings’ section, immediately following this one.

IV. Analysis and Findings

A. Support for Open Borders

The first idea analyzed was the public support for open borders. To do this, I analyzed opinion polls for Spain that dealt with ideas pertaining to Carens’ arguments for open borders. Some of these include; those in support of democratic ideals and human rights, as well as freedom of individuals. All of the polls that I gathered data from are recent, the oldest piece of data coming from a Eurobarometer poll in 2004. All of the data in this section will demonstrate Spain’s public support, or lack thereof, for democracy, and what Carens considers democratic ideals, such as freedom, justice, and moral equality of all people. Another idea that comes from Carens that could be added under this heading is human rights. Carens says in *The Ethics of Immigration* that generally speaking, democracies practice, or try to, respect for human rights. The definition of what is actually a human right, and what is included in the list, will vary from country to country. So I analyze data that deals with human rights in more of a theoretical sense, as in, how well people think Spain is respectful of human rights and if they support the idea of it. All of this data serves to examine whether or not, based on these polls, Spanish people would support the idea of open borders in their country.

i. Democracy and Democratic Ideals

First we examine Spanish support for democracy and democratic principles like liberty (freedom), justice, and moral equality. This data will serve to show not only how supportive Spanish people are of democracy in general, but also how to interpret the data to hypothesize whether or not Spaniards would support the idea of open borders.
The World Values Survey (WVS) is a global research initiative that began in 1981. I examined Wave 6 of this survey, which took place in between 2010 and 2014. Spain’s actual interviewing process took place in 2011, in which they interviewed 1,189 people ("World Values Survey"). One question asked was “How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically?”. The interviewees were given a scale where 1 means it is not important at all, and 10 means it is absolutely important. Of these, 74.9% (891) of people gave it at least an 8, meaning that it was almost absolutely important to live in a democratic country. Another survey, the European Values Study (EVS), has been integrated in the WVS to compare data. However, they also to national studies, and in 2008, the 4th wave came out. I examined this data from Spain’s survey. 1500 people were interviewed for this survey. One question was “Are you satisfied with democracy?”, and interviewees could choose “very satisfied”, “rather satisfied”, “not very satisfied”, or “not at all satisfied”. 55.7% (835) of respondents said they were at least “rather satisfied” (European Values Study). Additionally, respondents were asked to agree or disagree with certain statements. One of them was “Democracy is the best political system”. The choices were “agree strongly”, “agree”, disagree”, and “disagree strongly”. 90% (1,349) of respondents said they either strongly agree or agree.

Another organization, Latinobarómetro, conducts research through opinion polls, but only for Latin America and Spain. I analyzed the results for Spain from the year 2013. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, so I will show the original questions and then give translations. There were 2,459 respondents for this year. The first relevant question was posed as a general statement, and then respondents picked the answer which best fit their feelings about it. It read in Spanish, “Apoyo a la democracia”, or Support for democracy. The options were: “La democracia es preferible a cualquier otra forma de gobierno” (Democracy is preferable to any
other form of government), “En algunas circunstancias, un gobierno autoritario puede ser preferible” (In some circumstances, an authoritative government is preferable), and “A la gente como uno, nos da lo mismo un régimen democrático” (To the people as a whole, we are indifferent to a democratic regime). 75% (1,844) of respondents said it was the preferred form of government (“Latinobarómetro 2013”).

Source: Latinobarómetro 2013

In a separate question from the same survey, 84.9% of respondents said that they were in agreement with the statement that although democracy has its problems, it is the best system of government (“La democracia puede tener problemas, pero es el mejor sistema del gobierno”).

There is a difference between theory and reality though. El Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), or Center for Sociological Investigations, does a survey every month of values and feelings about the current situation in Spain, whether economically, politically, or socially. I investigated the most recently published survey, from December of 2017. 2,476 people were interviewed for this survey. One of the questions was “En su opinión, diría Ud. que, actualmente, la sociedad española es muy, bastante, poco o nada democrática?” - “In your opinion, would you say that, currently, Spanish society is very, quite, a bit, or not at all
democratic?” (Barómetro de diciembre 2017). 87.8% of the respondents thought that it was at least a little democratic.

![Diagram showing the percentage of respondents' views on democratic values in Spanish society from 1994 to 2017.](image)

Source: Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas

Additionally, the question was posed “Y cree Ud. que dentro de 5 años la sociedad española será más, igual, o menos democrática?” - “And do you believe that within 5 years, Spanish society will be more, equally, or less democratic?” (Barómetro de diciembre 2017). 74.3% of respondents believe that Spain will be at least equally as democratic in 5 years.

So it can be inferred from these data that Spain is, at least in a theoretical sense, supportive of democracy. The respondents tended to prefer democracy to any other form of government, even if they agree that it is not perfect (like any other system). And although they are not totally convinced that their country’s democracy is working its best, it is clear that they are optimistic about the future (see CIS results). While this alone cannot stand as evidence that Spain would support open borders because they support democracy, it does say a lot about their
collective values, which can be powerful forces when it comes to how people act and what policies they support.

ii. Human Rights and Other Rights

Another one of Carens’s major points, connected with the democratic ideals, is that of human rights. He compares modern citizenship to feudalism, and says that it is used to discriminate against people arbitrarily. He cites the right to free movement first. He says that the reasons people move within their state are the same reasons that people choose to move internationally. So I examined Spain’s support for human rights and this right to free movement that Carens speaks about.

As a member of the European Union (EU), Spanish citizens are free to move within the EU, to any country, in order to work, study, and live. Unsurprisingly, in a survey done by Eurobarometer (an organization controlled by the European Commission), 92% of Spaniards supported this right to free movement within EU borders (“Eurobarometer”).
The interesting thing about the EU is that although it functions as a large political unit, its member states retain their distinctly separate cultures. There are borders, but they are more flexible and allow free movement within them. A big leap would have to occur in order to infer that, for Spaniards, this “open borders” situation that exists within the EU shows a certain truth about free international borders, but it does say that they are generally accepting of this in-between- not complete open borders, but more open than exist elsewhere in the world. The World Values Survey for 2010-2014 also posed a question- respondents were given a list of qualities that “children can be encouraged to learn at home. Which, if any, do you consider to be especially important?” (“World Values Survey”). For the quality “Tolerance and respect for other people?”, 74.1% of respondents, 881 people, mentioned it in the list they considered most important. So Spaniards consider this important and a value that they want to be passed down to the next generation of people. Even though they consider it important, that does not mean they
think that the current generation is doing a good job of it now. When asked for the WVS if individual human rights were being respected in their country, only 51.9% of people said that there was at least “fairly much respect”, while a considerable minority of 39.4% of people said not much respect was being given (“World Values Survey”). Even more telling is the survey question from CIS- “Y los/as españoles/as en particular, en comparación con hace 5 años, cree Ud. que son ahora más, igual, o menos respetuosos/as a los/as demás?”- And for Spanish people in particular, in comparison with five years ago, do you believe they are more, equally, or less respectful of others?”. 77.7% of respondents said that they are equally or less respectful (Barómetro de diciembre 2017). So it makes sense that they would want the next generation to do better.

In the 2004 Eurobarometer, various statements were given and respondents had to say whether they tended to agree or disagree with them. One was “The European Union should guarantee Human Rights in each member state, even if this is contrary to the wishes of some member states”. 81% of Spaniards interviewed tended to agree (“Eurobarometer”). This shows a clear preference towards human rights.

iii. Conclusions

Even though they strongly support democracy and democratic ideals, Spanish people tended to also strongly support human rights and their development. Whether or not that is contradictory is another question. Carens would argue that the two are complementary, because in a true democracy, all human rights are respected, including the right to free movement. And while their support for the current EU system of free movement indicates a preference for personal liberty, this does not necessarily justify their support for more open borders than currently exist in Europe.
B. Support for Closed Borders

For this section, I looked at various indicators that Spain might not be extremely supportive of more open borders. For example, I examined general attitudes towards immigrants, in particular undocumented immigrants.

i. General Attitudes toward Immigrants

Spanish attitudes toward immigrants and foreign workers can vary from study to study, but the results form a pattern that describes the general feelings that people have about those not from Spain. At the local level, things look a bit differently. In the WVS for 2010-2014, when given a list of groups that the respondents would not like to have as a neighbor, 92.5% did not mention immigrants or foreign workers (“World Values Survey”). So they do not have a problem interacting on an interpersonal basis with those of different backgrounds. However, when asked in the WVS how much trust was placed in people of another nationality, 45% of respondents said that either no trust was placed or very little.

The European Values Study of 2008 demonstrates certain attitudes about immigrants in general in Spain, not just those in one’s own community. When given the statement “There are too many immigrants living in your country”, respondents could either agree or disagree. Of the 1,500 respondents, 917 (or about 61.1%) chose “agree strongly” or “agree” (European Values Study). In addition, the question was posed, “Are you concerned with immigrants?” and the choices were: very much, much, to a certain extent, not so much, or not at all. Of the respondents, 78.5% of them were at least “to a certain extent” concerned about immigrants (European Values Study). While this does not give the reasons for concern, it does demonstrate that Spaniards believe the presence of immigrants in the country is cause for at least a bit of concern.
ii. Desired Policies towards Immigrants

When it comes to how people view immigrants, it helps to discuss how they would prefer the government handle the influx of migrants, particularly those who are there without authorization. The European Values Study asked respondents, “What should the government do about people from less developed countries who want to come here to work?”. Of the response options, 87.5% of respondents chose either “Strict limits on the number of foreigners” or “come when jobs are available” (European Values Study). Considering that a large number of immigrants chose to move because of economic reasons, these policy possibilities would most likely curb the number of immigrants significantly. But it is clear that Spanish people support a restriction or control on the number of people who are allowed in the country. This view aligns with the “Conventional View” held by Michael Walzer and scholars who support a state’s right to control immigration how they want.

The European Social Survey (ESS) and International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) have both done extensive research into people’s feelings about migration, particularly differentiating between migrants within and outside the EU. For example, the ESS surveyed people in 2014 and asked questions about educated versus non-educated migrants within and outside of the EU. One of the questions was, “To what extent should Spain allow unskilled labourers from (country in Europe that has the most migrants to Spain)?”. Of the 432 respondents, 74.6% of them said that Spain should only allow “a few” or “none” (European Social Survey).
Given the same question but substituting the country for one outside of Europe that provides the largest number of immigrants, 70.2% said “allow a few” or “allow none” (European Social Survey). So it is clear that Spaniards are supportive of restrictions, regardless of home country, on immigrants that want to come and work there. Additionally, the ISSP did a survey in 2016 and asked about the number of immigrants in Spain. The question was posed: “Should the number of immigrants to Spain be:”, followed by the choices “increased a lot, increased a little,
remain the same as it is, reduced a little, reduced a lot” (ISSP Research Group). Of the 1,213 respondents, 34.8% said it should remain the same, while 61.9% said that it should be reduced by either a little or a lot. ISSP also gave respondents a statement, “Spain should take stronger measures to exclude illegal immigrants” and asked them to either agree or disagree. 63.5% said either “agree strongly” or “agree” (ISSP Research Group).

Source: International Social Survey

An interesting deviation from this trend is the treatment of refugees. People were given the statement in the ESS survey, “Government should be generous judging applications for refugee status”, and asked to agree or disagree. Out of 1,777 respondents, 59.5% said, “Agree strongly”
or “agree” (European Social Survey). So there is a clear divide between refugees and immigrants. It is most likely that people see immigrants coming for economic reasons, while refugees are escaping some kind of danger in their home country. Regardless, there is support for some kind of restriction on who enters the country from outside.

iii. Conclusions

This leaves some confusion as to whether Spaniards would support open borders or not. On the ideological level, most people support democratic values and have no problems personally with immigrants or foreigners. They would not be bothered to have a neighbor that is an immigrant, and support the free movement of people within the EU. However, there is also data that states that most people would not like to let in a lot of foreigners, even from other European countries. So where does that leave the verdict?

C. Support for a “Middle Ground”

Neither of the two above-mentioned positions has been able to adequately prove or disprove the other. Theoretically, Spaniards do support the values that Carens uses in his arguments for open borders, but other data shows a desire for tighter border control. This section is concerned with special cases of migration, like that of refugees and asylum-seekers. Refugees differ from cases of voluntary migration, and the law often protects their rights. This section also includes data about citizenship that helps support this “middle ground” - that is, more of a status quo opinion, allowing in refugees, but limiting the number of total immigrants. I seek to understand feelings toward refugee policies versus that of “normal” immigrants, and hypothesize what the data can tell us about those feelings.

i. Support for Refugees
I mentioned in the above section the support for refugees in a survey by ESS. To reiterate here, 59.5% of the 1,777 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the government should generously judge refugee applications (European Social Survey).

Source: European Social Survey 2015

It makes sense that there would be more support for refugees than ‘normal’ migrants, as refugees face special risks and fear violence in their home countries. Along with the case of refugees, there is a possibility that they will return home. This process is called repatriation. Not every single refugee or asylum-seeker taken in by a country will stay there permanently, though many do. Additionally, there can be external pressure from other countries to accept refugees, even if the particular country does not have the economic resources to take care of such an influx of people. Since there can be many reasons a country takes in refugees and one could argue that
true altruism in this case may not be possible, this statistic alone is not enough to support a favorable opinion of open borders. It more likely represents a general sympathy to refugees and perhaps reflects a moral obligation to help them out, even if temporarily.

ii. Citizenship Data

Many of the surveys I examined question people about citizenship and what is important to truly be a part of a society. While some of the data provided strong theoretical support for democratic values and human rights, other data pointed to a more moderate position, one that values both birthright citizenship and a long length of residency in that country. The International Social Survey phrased it as, “How important is it, to be truly Spanish, to have Spanish citizenship?” (ISSP Research Group). Of the 1,213 respondents, 78.6% said “very important” or “fairly important”.

Source: International Social Survey Programme
They posed the same question, except swapping out “having Spanish citizenship” for “Living most of life in Spain”. The results were identical- 78.6% of the 1,213 respondents said “very important” or “fairly important” (ISSP Research Group). So this data demonstrates an equal value for living a long time in a country, and being born there. This longevity of residence, whether from birth or not, is important to social inclusion, one of Carens’s points, but the data for support of solely long residence does not show people favoring it over birthright citizenship. It is more representative of the status quo, which places value on both being born somewhere and rights gained from living somewhere for a long time. Another question from this survey supports this point. The statement was given, “Legal immigrants (who are not citizens) should have the same rights as citizens”, and of the same 1,213 respondents, 82.2% said either “agree” or “agree strongly” (ISSP Research Group).

The European Values Study asked nearly identical questions and had similar results. When given the question, “To be considered Spanish, how important is it to have been born in Spain?”, 41.1% of the 1,500 respondents said “very important” and 32.4% said “quite important” (European Values Study). Given the same question but substituting the words “to have been born in Spain” for “living in the country for a long time”, 26.1% said “very important” and 46.2% said “quite important”.

Demonstrated by this data, there is a correlation between living somewhere for a long time and the feeling like a part of society. Whether that is through immigration or being born in a place, both create a feeling of social inclusion. Since there is not a clear preference towards the longevity of residence not by birthright citizenship, it cannot defend a support of open borders.

iii. Conclusions
The support for refugees and the defense of social inclusion demonstrate a support for a “middle ground” in the debate for open borders. These questions show a moderate position that sympathizes with the struggles of refugees separate from other immigrants, and values longevity of residence as well as birthright citizenship. It does not support either fully open or fully closed borders, but instead supports perhaps slightly more open borders than exist in the world today. This could be because of Spain’s membership in the European Union and the open borders that exist there, and also the fact that Spain’s southern border is the destination for many immigrants from Northern Africa and the Middle East. It is also the site of many arguable human rights abuses by border guards. By at least making it slightly easier to get into the country legally, Spain could avoid the “bad publicity” in the European Union and United Nations, which upholds universal human rights.

V. Conclusions about Data and Final Thoughts

Given the three possible positions presented in this project- support for open borders, support for closed borders (the ‘status quo’), and support for a middle ground, I propose that a majority of Spaniards, given these choices in a survey, would choose the second option. This conclusion is based on the data from Section IV and the trends it displays. The instances in which it appeared that there was support for human rights and democratic values ultimately demonstrated that these questions were based in theory. In theory, Spanish people do not have a problem with immigrants and think they are valid members of society. There is support for refugees and displaced people, but it also has to be taken into consideration that there could be more of a sensed moral obligation to accept them. Additionally, as mentioned in the previous section, there is an understanding that some refugees will return to their home country when and if it is possible.
I noted earlier in the text that there seem to be contradictions in the data itself. There was strong support for the EU policy of free movement within its borders, yet there was also much pushback from allowing more immigrants in, even others from Europe who have a right to move there because of this policy. So there is a theoretical support for this personal liberty, but a rejection of it being carried out in Spain. This data leads to the conclusion that the average Spaniard would reject open international borders. One might not connect free international movement with Carens’s argument that it is within the realm of human rights.

The disparity in these results is not entirely surprising, because in theory, human rights sound like a good idea, and something that is a noble pursuit for all countries, and democracy is supported generally because Spain is a democratic country. However, the way in which democratic values and human rights are manifested in a state can look different than what is expected, and it could be argued, as is by Carens’ critics, that these ideas do not necessitate open borders. Whatever the case may be for Spain in particular, the data is clear in its statement that Spanish society would not be so receptive to the possibility of open borders if it became a reality in the paradigm of international relations.
Bibliography


