

# **A Past that Does Not Die Out: Coping with the Memory of the Spanish Civil War**

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**Abstract:** *What does 'doing justice to the past' mean when we have to deal with societies that are haunted by the memory of their traumatic history? Should justice in this case mean paying homage to the victims and restoring their dignity, or rather healing the emotional damage inflicted upon the survivors? Do consensual strategies enjoy in this context a moral superiority over more confrontational approaches? The so-called Law on Historical Memory, which was passed in Spain in 2007, has shown the difficulties of applying the principles of transitional justice to the politics of memory in practice. This paper portrays how the narratives of recent Spanish history have been transformed by the social and generational changes which occurred in the last decade. These changes have not only altered the normative perception of the transition to democracy that took place in the late 70's, but also the political culture that emerged from it. Additionally, the paper differentiates the therapeutic, the moral and the political dimensions of historical memory, and how they could function as a resource for social reconciliation.*

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