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# Introduction

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# INTRODUCTION

In the thirty years since the isolationist dictatorship of General Francisco Franco ended, Spain can boast of sustained economic development and expansion. There are, however, complex yet subtle challenges that this Iberian nation faces: challenges that are part and parcel of what highly developed countries contend with. The articles in this issue of *Perspectives* have been written by ten Martindale Center students who made Spain their destination in May 2004. They focus on a number of the most vexing problems the country needs to address in the short-to-medium term to maintain its positive socioeconomic trajectory.

Stephen Zantias outlines the turbulent Basque separatist conflict in an article that delves into its historical and regional origins. He explains why support among the Basque population for the violent approach of the terrorist group ETA is waning. He also discusses how and why the political means and will seem to be emanating from the grassroots level in search of a peaceful and acceptable resolution for both the Basque separatist camp and the national government.

The Muslim reconquest of Spain by the Moors (*La reconquista*) after 500 years is how many Spaniards nervously refer to the growing northern African immigrant presence and its uneasy integration into contemporary Spain. Rajiv Mehrotra writes eloquently about these developments in historically homogeneous Spain, which is struggling with issues of tolerance of diverse cultures and races while it experiences an increased rate of conversion by Spaniards from Catholicism to Islam. Adding to the complexity of the highly charged immigrant issue are the March 2004 train bombings in Madrid, which led to the targeting of innocent Muslims in the country.

In a related paper on immigration in Spain, Monica Hamrick focuses on the effects of economic immigrants from lesser developed countries (LDCs) in Africa and Latin America. She provides a succinct overview of significant changes in Spain's demographics over the years and compares the country's declining population with the surging populations of the LDCs that are the major sources of Spanish immi-

grants. Immigration into Spain is also a topic of great interest and concern for the European Union, as fully one-third of all immigrants into the EU come through Spain.

In the intensely traditional Spanish home, the heretofore customary place of women in Spanish society, new educational and career opportunities have presented exciting alternatives in which women can express themselves and achieve economic independence and success. In her essay, Andrea Englander argues that "Spain lags in comparison to other European countries with respect to gender equality." Furthermore, by hindering "women's capacity to be prominent contributors to society," Spain is therefore "underutilizing its collective human capabilities and productivity potential." She argues that the political will in Spain is necessary to break with the rigid past and catch up with most of the rest of Europe.

Traditional family farming in Spain is slowly disappearing. In its place we are seeing highly concentrated, high-volume, chemically infused super-farms which are emptying the rural districts of their tight-knit communities and families. In recent years, however, an organic farming movement has appeared on the Spanish horizon. Olga Stewart describes this phenomenon in her article entitled "The Future of Spanish Small Farms: Organic Farming and Policy Change." Her research leads her to conclude that in Spain "consumer demand is increasing and consumer behavior indicates that the market is shifting in support of organic agriculture." She goes on to make a series of recommendations which if implemented mean that "Spain can take a big step toward preserving successful rural communities, maintaining a healthy environment, and ensuring quality foods."

The University of Salamanca in northwestern Spain, founded in 1218, is the sixth oldest university in the world in continuous operation. Salamanca symbolizes the heritage and prominence that higher education continues to have in Spanish society. According to Nick Lynch, though, it appears that Spain may be trying to prepare its university students for the 21st century "on the cheap." He points out that,