

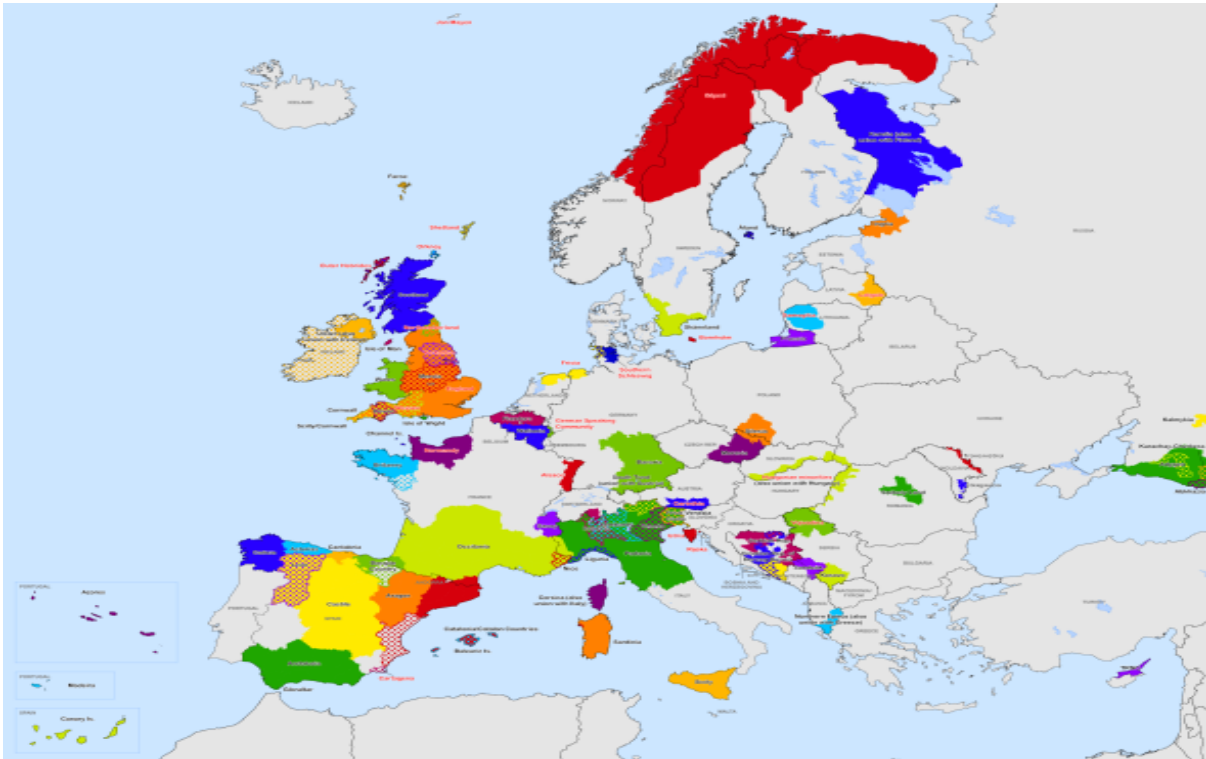
EUROPEAN CAUCUS
Topic C: European Independence Movements

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Background Information



One has to be careful when using words. Though words may many times seem similar, mirrors of one another where their alternating usage has no significance, choosing the wrong word will have huge effect in understanding what is meant. Not understanding? Try now. For instance, a large majority of people will see no difference in the words state and nation. In truth, the misuse of these two words is the main reason for the issue at hand.

State, as defined by dictionary.com, means a group of politically unified people, occupying a definite territory.

Nation, one the other hand, means an aggregation of persons of the same ethnic family, often speaking the same language or cognate (similar) languages.

Noticed the difference? No? There is a slight distinction that can be seen even in the dictionary's word choice. In a state, people do not have to speak the same language, they do not have to have the same ethnic language, or have the same culture. In a nation, people do not have to live "occupying a definite territory" and do not have to be politically unified.

Here is an example, a Brazilian living in Russia, is part of the Russian state. He is linked to the people that live in Russian borders under a same government and set of rules. On the other hand, even though he is living in Russia, he is still of Brazilian nationality, he speaks Portuguese, he identifies himself with the Brazilian culture, and has his family living far away in Brazil. If he is living in Russia by his own option, then we have no problem. Now, if this Brazilian is being forced to live in the Russian state against his own will, he will most definitely be unhappy. Now multiply this Brazilian, by a great number more of Brazilians living under the Russian state against their will. They have a number of things in common to each other and they all don't identify themselves with the state and culture they live under. They will most certainly want to go somewhere they identify themselves with. But what if there was no Brazil to go to? In this case, they would undoubtedly want to create their own state, where there are people like them and where they can freely express their culture and language with others.

There, you have the issue of independence movements in a nutshell.

Europe, is now living under this crisis. Countless peoples now desperately seek independence and their states are frantically trying to impede it from happening. Why, might one ask? It is actually very simple too.

Take Catalonia for example. Catalonia is a region in Spain where the ethnic group of the Catalans are appealing continuously for the independence of their territory. This not only increases tension and hatred within the nation but one also has to take in the economic aspect in account. Catalanian area alone produces 255 billion dollars of the country's (Spain) GDP. That equals roughly 16% of Spanish GDP. If Catalonia was to become independent, Spain would lose 16% of their GDP. It is important to remember that Spain is one of the main countries hit by the economic crisis and it is in no condition to lose any of the resources it has. Arguably, Catalonia also represents a significant part of population, so there would be an equal proportion of "loss". Even though that seems acceptable, we need also to recognize that the GDP takes in account the average therefore it is not accurate when speaking about the economic

status of each individual citizen. Additionally, Spain would suffer a huge blow since it would be losing workforce.

Another problem that might be caused by forced inclusion of a nationality of different people in a state is war, and war might come in two ways.

The first way is civil war. A civil war would erupt if no reasonable solution is found as the two cultures begin to diverge and increase or diminish in influence. Resembling a physics law where two different bodies cannot occupy the same area, two cultures in increasing tension cannot be together. The rising tension will eventually release enough sparks to set the conflict on fire.

This of course, can also trace back to the Spanish Civil War, where general and dictator Francisco Franco tried in a failed attempt to eradicate Catalan culture. He repressed the language and the culture. Even though he massacred the population, he was not able to exterminate their culture because it is ingrained in them; it is part of their nationality and of who they are.

The second way would be war from the outside. Looking at the Ottoman Empire as an example, we can analyze that one of the reasons To crumble, was the lack of patriotism amongst the people. The Ottoman Empire had over six different nationalities inside its territories. This caused instability within the people. The different nationalities sought their independence and caused major disturbance. Eventually, the Ottoman Empire fragmented and as it was the most powerful empire, when it crumbled, a power vacuum surged. Other states quickly tried to fulfill it. This is also one of the leading reasons to the power vacuum increased tension in between countries struggling to become the main power.

If all independence movements did occur, Europe would be ruptured into tiny nations. It would inevitably generate a power vacuum. It would inevitably increase tension. Would we not be looking into another war?

Lastly, what if only one nation became independent. Would it be acceptable? Would it not create a domino effect, leading a rise in tension, perhaps many civil wars, and result in many deaths?

Timeline

Catalonia

1000–1035- Under Sancho III the Great , Pamplona controlled the entire southern Basque Country

1058- Former Vasconia turned into Gascony, merged by personal union with Aquitaine (William VIII). Gascony progressively moved away from the Basque political sphere. Basque people increasingly turned into Gascon on the plains to the north of the central and west Pyrenees



1659- Treaty of the Pyrenees

1931- Granted self-government to Catalonia

1936–1939- Spanish Civil War (Basque country and much of Spain, Catalonia fought hard to defend the Second Spanish Republic)

1959–1974 Spain experienced the second fastest economic expansion in the world in what became known as the Spanish Miracle and Catalonia prospered greatly from the expansion as Spain's most important industrial and tourist zone

1978 Catalonia voted overwhelmingly for the new democratic Spanish constitution that recognized Catalonia's autonomy and language.

Basque Country

4th and 5th century- Basque rebellions against Roman feudalism, the area eventually formed part of the independent Duchy of Vasconia

1512- Bible was first translated into the Basque language.

1610- Henry III of Navarre became King of France but kept Navarre as a formally independent state, until in 1610 this separation was suppressed

1936- Spanish Civil War already raging and



automatically abolished when the Spanish Nationalist troops occupied the territory

1978- The Basque Country or Basque Autonomous Community was granted the status of nationality within Spain, attributed by the Spanish Constitution of 1978

2003- governing Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) proposed to alter this statute through the Ibarretxe Plan

2005- Despite its mandate of the majority of the autonomous Parliament, the main two parties in Spain (PSOE, PP) imposed a blockade on a discussion of the Plan in the Spanish Parliament, leading to the delaying of discussion of the topic

Venice

697- 1797 Venetian Republic was the one of the first modern republics of the world

1797- Napoleon traded what remained of Venice to the Republic to Austria

1848- Venetians, led by Daniele Manin, rebelled against Austrian rule and established the Republic of San Marco

2010- Regional election the LV, in steady rise since 2001, was by far the largest party in the region with 35.2% of the vote, while its leader Luca Zaia was elected President of Veneto by a landslide 60.2%. The combined result of Venetist parties was 37.6%, the highest ever.

2011- 50% of Venetians support the independence of Veneto

2012- Put those favoring independence at 53.3% (with the support from foreign-born Venetians at 55.0%)

2013- First step mandated by resolution 44 by appointing the special commission of jurists who would examine the referendum issue



Scotland

843- Scotland was an independent country from its foundation in the Early Middle Ages, dating founding to around 843

1603- the countries shared the same monarch in a personal union when James VI of Scotland was declared King of England and Ireland in what was known as the Union of the Crowns

1922- The 26 southern counties of Ireland left the Union, which became known as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

1853- "home rule" movement for a Scottish Assembly was first taken up

1949- A petition "was eventually signed by two million for Scottish Independence. The covenant was ignored by the main political parties.

1997- Labour Party won the general election and the Secretary of State for Scotland agreed to the proposals for a Scottish Parliament. A referendum was held in September and 74.3% of those who voted approved the devolution plan.

1999- Scotland held its first election for a devolved parliament

2013- Scottish Government published *Scotland's Future*, a 670-page white paper laying out the case for independence and the means through which Scotland might become an independent country



Key Terms

Separatism - advocacy of a state of cultural, ethnic, tribal, religious, racial, governmental or gender separation from the larger group. While it often refers to full political secession, separatist groups may seek nothing more than greater autonomy. Some groups refer to their organizing as independence, self-determination, partition or decolonization movements instead of, or in addition to, autonomist, separatist or secession movements.

Sovereignty- political theory, is a substantive term designating supreme authority over some polity. It is a basic principle underlying the dominant Westphalian model of state foundation. In layman's terms, it means a state or a governing body has the full right and power to govern itself without any interference from outside sources or bodies.

Occupation- acquisition of territory that belongs to no state, or terra nullius;

Prescription- effective control of territory of another acquiescing state;

Operations of nature - acquisition of territory through natural processes like river accretion or volcanism

Guiding Questions

- What are the pros and cons of generalized separatist movements?
- What determines whether separatist movements are considered legitimate or invalid? Should there be an international statute to clarify this?
- Which should take precedence, territorial integrity or self-determination?
- Under what circumstances can one country invade another?
- What consists of the right to rule?
- If human rights are being violated, can one country interfere in another's affairs?

Further Research

<http://buzzmachine.com/2011/06/03/e-g8-a-discussion-about-sovereignty/>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-26550736>

<http://www.debatingeurope.eu/focus/independence-catalonia/#.VBW7oPIdVz4>

<http://www.thenational.ae/world/europe/the-facts-european-separatist-movements>