***Nationalism and the Quest for Greater Autonomy of the Integration in Western European Nation-States***

ABSTRACT: The aim of this research is twofold. First, it examines under what factors involving devolution provoke the rise of dual regional and national identities and lead towards a quest for greater autonomy. Second, it considers whether the emergence of the European Union has lead to the strengthening or diminishing of ethnic separatism in nations within Western Europe. In this research project I examine three cases of ethnic separatism, Catalonia and Basque region in Spain and Scotland in Great Britain to show how the peripheral regions are increasingly becoming more anti-central government and asserting their ethnic identities. The European Union has enabled an economic model in which these peripheral regions do not have the same need to remain connected to the state. In the case study of Catalonia, the people feel they would be better off if they were an economic entity separated from the rest of the mother country of Spain. I will show the importance of the historical roots of nationalist sentiments, economic disparities and political grievances against the state which have contributed to the quest for greater autonomy. This study of ethnic separatism and nationalism in advanced industrialized countries in Europe help us better understand the contributing factors of nationalist movements. ***Thesis:*** *Economic disparity in advanced industrialized countries and the integration within contemporary Western Europe has changed the relationship between the nation and the state and created a desire for these regions to maintain their distinctive differences.*

***An Introduction:***

Ethnic conflict and emergence of separatist movements is generally viewed as a ‘Third World’ problem. However, there is a trend of nationalist movements that are very advanced and occur in industrialized regions. With the creation of the European Union under the Maastricht Treaty in November of 1993, ethnic identities have strengthened. The three case studies addressed are in Spain, the Basque Country and in the United Kingdom in Scotland. The three modern liberal democracies considered in this research are each national minorities with a strong sense of identity based upon the belief in a common ethnic origin and a sense of shared ethno-history. The study of these advanced industrialized regions advance the understanding of ethnic separatism and national identity in Europe. In fact, contemporary Western Europe has a growing trend in the growth of nationalist activities in peripheral regions as democratic ideas have sparked many nationalist movements. This trend of nationalism can have profound consequences because achieving independence in one region may set precedence or an example for other advanced separatist movements. Therefore, it is important to understand the social origins and the potential outcomes of ethnic separatist movements in Europe. This idea of nationhood is a complex topic. Therefore, its study must be expansive.

The similarities between each of the case studies are that each of the three regions is at varying stages in the quest for greater autonomy. The regions of Spain in the Basque country and in Catalonia and Scotland are all advanced-industrialized regions which vary in differing levels of intensity in the struggle for more rights and freedom from the central government. Differences within these regions exist because each region is in various stages of development towards greater autonomy and freedoms. Despite these differences in development, each is useful in understanding ethnic groups that are in conflict. Therefore, the commonalities and distinctions between the regions contribute to the study of nationalist trends analyzing the separatist movements in Western Europe.

1. **A historical perspective**

Most importantly, in every nationalist movement, history affects the way regions see themselves as a collective group. Consequently, history plays a primary role in nationalist movements. In understanding the historical background of ethnic separatism it is relevant in understanding how people within the regions who are seeking greater independence have felt they have been continuously deprived of what they view as legitimately theirs. The historical grievances of a region are contributing factors and lay a foundation for those nations to seek greater sovereignty. In Catalonia a distinguishable Catalan culture developed in the Middle Ages and has strengthened through time. The culture has developed and has been reinforced despite the loss of the Catalan sovereignty at the end of the War of Spanish Secession in 1714, and the ensuing repeated suppression of the Catalan government, schools, language, and values. The essence of the separatist sentiment in Catalonia is a cry for greater freedom and for a unified voice to be heard by the centralized government.

Furthermore, suppression or dominance of the central government is fundamental in understanding the nationalist sentiment. Catalonia fought to defend the Second Republic during the Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1939. During this time, the Catalan language was illegal, a law imposed by Franco, because the official language was Spanish. This was implemented by Franco as a political move to unify the country under his 40 years as dictator. After Franco’s power came to an end, the people in Catalonia felt an intense loss because of the laws imposed upon them from the central government. “Culture, revived to support group identity, became a public issue between groups (Horowitz 73). The focus in this study is on the definition of a nation as “the collective sovereign from common political participation; a relation known as ethnicity” (Facey 7), in which the nation comprises a common language, history, or broader ‘cultural identity’. Scotland historically has sought more rights from the central government in Britain and as a people feel as if the dominant power has been insensitive to their concerns and has suffocated their ability to make decisions for themselves based on their collective needs.

In summary, as regions seek greater autonomy or in the most established form, full-scale independence where the region cuts its ties with its former government. People have a “common origin and common fate (Hossay 11)”. While common origin is indeed an important contribution to the understanding of the nationalist sentiment, the influence of territorial boundaries on ethnicity is also essential in understanding how history has shaped the quest for greater autonomy. “It is apparent that territorial unification, besides shaping perceptional judgments of ethnic affinity and disparity, created new conditions and opportunities that emerging ethnic groups were suited to meet (Horowitz 75)”.

**II. Center-Periphery Influence of Geography in the Shaping of National Boundaries & in the Shaping of a Dominant Culture**

When peripheral regions are not only geographically separated by regional boundaries but are confined by their lack of rights in the central body of government. This can be seen in all major nationalist movements. The geography of a region has a great impact in the shaping of national boundaries and in the development of nationalism. More specifically, the impact of wars in the shaping of national boundaries has transformed Western Europe. There is a common trend that because the periphery regions are not geographically close to the major governing bodies the people feel as though their voice is not heard by the central government. The further the region is from the central government the greater the feelings of separatist sentiments amongst people.

In taking a more general approach to the reasons for ethnic conflict, ethnic groups assimilate or differentiate themselves from groups they are a part of formerly. The most common theme of ethnic separation movements is “an attempt to recapture a fading culture or a glorious past in order to explain an unsatisfying present and point the way to a more fulfilling future (Horowitz)”. As changes in group boundaries and conflict relationships occur cultural movements either accelerate or slow down, or disappear altogether. When a particular ethnic group feels as though it is being drowned by a larger ethnic group they tend to stress their unique culture as a subgroup within the larger culture. This trend helps them maintain their distinctive history and culture. Cultural movements that aim to re-establish ethnic boundaries contribute to conflict between ethnic groups. Through the process of differentiation groups divide and branch out on their own. Although every case is different there are regular patterns when ethnic changes occur. Cultural revivals often go hand-in-hand with threats to group identity. These revivals are frequently reactions to an anticipated loss of a cultural identity.

Devolution, or home-rule, has been a major constitutional issue in a country seeking greater autonomy. In the United Kingdom, this constitutional controversy intensifies over the years as demands for regional autonomy grow in scope and intensity. For Scotland, a constitutional grievance intensified the movement. In November of 1975 the British government, in an attempt to lessen the conflict and feelings of grievances of the Scottish people, published what is commonly known as a White Paper. This attempted effort to appease those in favor of devolution resulted in the White Paper titled: ¨Our Changing Democracy: Devolution to Scotland and Wales¨. The White Paper had an obverse affect the discontent brewing in Scotland intensified for a number of concerns. According to many Scottish in favor of regional independence the White Paper was simply a ploy by the British Parliament to pacify them. It was a form of ¨political machinery…Parliament has become outmoded and in need of reform (Meadows)”. The government was unable to relate to the people and find a viable solution to their grievance.

There is a major trend in the nationalist movement that is the feeling of resentment by peripheral groups towards the central government’s inability to come up with viable solutions to the grievances of the people. Those in favor desire a sincere effort on behalf of the central form of government to truly relate to their grievance. As is often the case to maintain a sense of nationalism, a central government enforces forms a standardized education, laws, and policies. As a consequence, these standardized methods to create a unitary nationalist system isolate smaller groups. This is a very complicated matter and often the central government does not understand that what the people need is not what seems a trite end-all solution, but rather a realistic promise the government takes into consideration the people’s demands. In support of this idea, the Scottish nationalists declare the British do not seem to understand Scotland or Scottish problems. Accentuating the problem is that, as Scots view things, they lack an effective voice within the government because Parliament is dominated by English interests.

While the role of central government grievances in nationalist development towards greater autonomy, the impact on foreign policy-making of the central government separatist movements and how these groups operate in a national political environment is important in the study of ethnic separatism. The external environment in which separatist movements occur and the foreign policy of the dominant culture impacts the probable outcomes of separatist movements. Power distribution in foreign policy has a direct relationship to separatism Also, ethnic separatism grows out of intensifying ethno-nationalism which consequently alters the course of history (Shiels 13).

Demands for regional autonomy in Scotland have been growing over time with a sharp increase after 1975. The peripheral areas of Scotland, Wales, and Ulster comprising the ¨Celtic fringe¨ of the UK are reacting to what they view as the central government´s lack of political purpose and its inability to deal with the economic problems faced in the countries under its control. Scottish nationalists like to point out that their country is the oldest kingdom presently in existence in Europe. ¨It long antedates the union of the Scottish and English crowns in 1603 and the Act of Union of 1707, which created the Kingdom of Great Britain and a joint Parliament in Westminster.¨ As a result, Scotland has had a long history of its own separate legal and judicial systems, educational structure, and established religion, all of which remained under the Act of Union.

Political scientist Karl Deutsh, focused on the study of war and peace, nationalism, co-operation, communication, and the theories of integration and segregation. The exploitation of outside communities by what he terms a “core community” occurs when a core community “uses its political and economic power to remain superior”. However, differences between communities do not disappear. Differences are indeed the basis of separatist agitations and demonstrations in the first place. He says that “the development of both social and political integration depends on the extent of mass communication and social integration. In regards to the core-periphery theory he argues that exploitation plays an important role in the development of ethnic separatism and nationalist movements.

1. **Linguistic differences**

Language is often used as a political tool. Language is a fundamental form of communicating regional identities and is a marker of a person´s political position. In every region apart from Scotland which shares English as a common language to the United Kingdom, the Basque Country, and Catalonia each have their own dialects. Politically the Spanish Constitution recognizes and guarantees that the rights of all nationalities and regions have autonomy and unity. In the autonomous regions there exist major differences amongst them. Some communities have their own history, language, and culture. The regions of Catalonia and the Basque Region in Spain have historically had the greatest demands for self-governance and have attained higher degrees of self-government in a shorter period of time than other regions. In Catalonia the use of the Catalan language is consistent with Catalan´s increasing social and influential use.

Diversity may undermine unity as the English language is rapidly becoming the lingua franca in the European Union. Simultaneously, while the English language is rapidly expanding in its use, each member state within Europe is encouraged to exercise its diversity by promoting its national language and identity in order for the citizens to feel like Europeans. The European Union has “individual languages’ and hence identities’ advocate, defending democratic diversity in Europe”. Language is a crucial part of identity. In this line of thought, language does not have to be an obstacle to the development of an increasingly integrated Europe.

The Basques speak Basque, and Catalan is the official language of Catalonia. An example of language used as a political indicator can be seen in Catalonia when the people who speak Catalan reject Spanish as the country’s only official language. They promote the Catalan culture and language. In Spain, there are several key features of the political landscape in Catalonia.

Scholar Carl argues that European identity has helped to sharpen the profile of regional identities. Carl seeks to discover how Europe has evolved and consequently has affected the development of regional identities. The case studies Carl investigates occur in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Carl concludes that the UK state is not threatened by the sharpening of regional identities and does not affect its stability.

1. **International Power Realignments & Political Power Struggles**

Since the birth of the European Union in 1993 which united 28 member countries with no internal borders or travel restrictions, it has created a less vulnerable situation for the countries in the EU. The EU has developed a [single market](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Single_market) through a standardized system of laws that apply in all member states. Within the [Schengen Area](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schengen_Area) passport controls have been abolished. These policies are aimed to ensure the [free movement of people, goods, services, and capital](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internal_market), enact legislation in justice and home affairs, and maintain common policies on trade, and [regional development](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regional_policy_of_the_European_Union). These objectives by the EU have consequently led to the advancement of ethnic separatist movements fueled by ethnic groups. Therefore, in the international power realignments many countries within the EU, such as the case studies of Scotland and Spain, feel they can survive and thrive without the larger nation-state. “The acceleration of European Community integration has provoked questions about national sovereignty and democratic representation. The disintegration of state socialism has produced a new ethnic assertiveness (Schlesinger)”. “The division of political control and scarce resources (Shiels)” is an indicator of inter-ethnic conflicts. The struggles of nation-states for power and resources have historically led to conflict and regional ethnic conflict is no exception.

While the struggle for power and resources in political power struggles play a role in the political environment, the link between cultural movements and political party’s gives parties’ influence over the direction in parties with take. “Policy is not merely an end product of ethnic conflict, for it reacts in turn upon conflict and upon boundaries and culture (Horowitz 74)”. He also says that territorial boundaries “help shape the level of group identity that emerges as most salient (Horowitz 74”.

The reason why devolution has become such a major political issue is that even the mere word ¨Devolution ¨ contains a kind of threat. The danger of home rule or autonomy in is that it may lead to independence causes the breaking apart of a centralized political power. What changed in the 1990s was the percentage of public in favor of devolution rose sharply. Additionally, a more intense feeling about the issue developed, followed by increased media coverage of the public debate over greater independence for countries seeking greater autonomy increased.

There is a link between regional attachment and support for European integration. “Individuals holding inclusive regional attachment sentiments are more likely to support European integration because the EU has facilitated regional autonomy and input in EU policies (Chacha 207)”. The creation of the EU has empowered subnational authorities to influence EU policies. As a result, member states have been able to rely less on the individual state but on extra-national channels. This means that states can have more security under the blanket of the European Union.

1. **Economic factors; Separatist Grievance against government**

Ethnic and cultural loyalties are long-lasting and enduring. The rapid changes in economic development in the past 100 years have not had much influence on ethnic loyalties of groups. In fact, ethnic identity has been one of the most unalterable of mass social characteristics. An important point is that belonging to a sizeable state have diminished, therefore the development of nationalist movements has grown increasing over the years.

Economics plays a role in the debate about devolution. In Scotland and Spain the decline of the economy has been a cause of their discontent. In Scotland, the discovery of oil under the North Sea led to the assumption that North Sea oil belongs to Scotland, so that an independent Scotland would have full control over the oil reserves. This has led to a new-found self confidence among the Scots, regardless of the validity of such an assumption. The political and economic decline of British power since WWII has adversely affected Scotland and the Celtic fringe surrounding the UK more than England. As a result, many Scots regard themselves as victims both of English exploitation as well as a ¨ineptly managed economy¨ as well as been made overconfident by North Sea oil.

There are economic reasons for regional inequality. “Economists have long recognized the existence and stubborn persistence of regional dualism at all levels of national development and throughout the historical experience of almost all presently developed countries (Williamson 3)”. Recently, there has been political concern with the aspect of economic growth and consequently, its impact on regional ethnic separatism. The popular new term Williamson uses to describe the phenomena of regional imbalance and inequity is “North-South problem”. Essentially it is an explanation for the occurrence of inequality in the distribution of income. There is a consistent relationship between regional dualism and national economic development. In early development stages of nation-states there is typically an increase in North-South dualism. In more advanced economic stages of a nation-state’s growth and development the trend is of a disappearance of severe North-South problems. There exists a clear relation between national development levels and regional inequality. Consequently, separatists often feel because they are forced to support the poorer regions of country. They want to demonstrate that they are economically capable of survival and would be better off economically without having the burden of paying taxes to the poorer regions within their country.

1. **Social differences**

For many people the assimilation to a national culture is not worth the price of losing their ethnic heritage. There is not a racially pure European population because Europe has established hybrid cultures. Class differences play an important role in shaping nationalism, particularly the middle class. The people in different social classes see themselves differently.

¨Notions of social difference, and understandings of the social order more generally, entail a historical reality that both bear upon and are embedded within individuals¨ (Hossay 5) He suggests supporters of a nationalist program are well-educated and informed about politics. ¨They are active agents in the construction of the ¨social facts¨ which guide them (Hossay 5) ¨. The historical reality of nations is embedded within nations and “the notions of social difference and understandings of the social order more generally (Hossay 1)”.

In an opposing view to Hossay argument that nationalists are well-educated and informed about politics, Shiels argues, “Like super powers, ethnic separatists are driven by their share of irrational impulses” (Shiels 282). He argues that because ethnic separatists are a minority they are profoundly anti-status quo. However, perhaps Hossay has a better support for his argument because nationalists would not be so passionate for their cause, so influential in their scope, and even risk their lives for their convictions in preservation of their regional identity on ‘irrational impulses’.

Social differences are not the only contributor to the nationalist movements according to Hossay. By the end of the nineteenth century, “popular demands for democratization and responsible government could no longer be resisted [by nationalists] (Hossay 2)”. While he argues the idea of popular sovereignty and redefinition of the perceived responsibilities of the government by the people affects the societal social order. However, this may miss a central aspect in the historical understanding of nationalism of ethnic identity and its formation because social differences are closely inter-related with ethnic identity.

In summary there exist social differences between groups in conflict, and consequently, these differences in society change the identity of groups. He proposes that changes in one’s identity occur when a person’s origins have been conveniently forgotten. For ethnic separatist assimilation to a national culture is not worth the price of the loss of ethnic heritage. The differences between social groups therefore are a major contributor to the discussion and study of ethnic separatism.

The development of a national identity is closely related to the struggles for greater democracy. Nationalists consider the future of their state, language, and culture to be reliant on the strengthening of cultural nationalism and of democracy. The chance for self-governance may prove to be the first chance for a region to have a more autonomous system and freely practice their distinctive cultural practices. Also, because of increased national activism neighboring states have seen successful examples of successful democratization and therefore, see greater autonomy is within reach. Under a central government’s rule, nationalists are considered a threat to social stability because of the potential for public mobilization and opposition that such a concentrated identity commands. Therefore, nationalists in the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Scotland view mobilizing towards greater autonomous rights provides a viable alternative and a crucial means by which to achieve greater autonomy.

Language is an important aspect of nationalist movements and social differences. The one common characteristic of nearly all the people who define themselves as “nationalist” is their use of a common language. “Ultimately, language has become a symbol, both positive and negative, because it is an important cultural link” (Facey 35). Language remains one of the most concrete characteristics and a commonality between nationalists. Perhaps the reason why the gradual disappearance of their language continues to alarm them and while simultaneously unifying them towards in their quest for greater autonomy.

In the nationalist movements in the regions in Spain, both know the Spanish national language. However, they often refuse to speak Spanish because of its relationship to the Spanish central government in Madrid. They are ¨Spanish but not Spanish¨ in a sense. This is significant because Spanish is definitely the language of primary usage for most of the population. Nonetheless, nationalists will continue to use Basque or Catalan even if conversing with someone who is speaking Spanish. For the nationalists, therefore, Catalan and Basque is thus a symbol. Language is symbolic of their political position and dedication to the revival of nationalism. Scotland is an interesting case in point because it shares a common language with the United Kingdom, however still has a strengthening nationalist development.

This strengthening nationalist development in the UK is related to the kind of authority the nation-state possesses. According to scholar Carl “the UK state is still seen as a legitimate level of authority, also show that for many, if not all, political parties, the ideal political framework is one in which there are fluid boundaries between regional, national and supranational levels (Carl 23). This signifies that in the quest for greater autonomy in the UK seeks to obtain a political framework that is not fixed and can moves between regional, national, and supranational levels.

1. **Conclusions & Political outcomes of devolution; Implications for the future in the study of ethnic separatism**

The cases studied are relevant to answering the questions of why and under what political and historical circumstances separatist movements occur. In the study of ethnic separatism, democratic principles play a major role because as more power is placed in the hands of the European people, nation-states are changing their political systems. The controversy of devolution has both domestic and international implications. “Significantly, the British predicament is not unique; particularly in Western Europe, this trend-toward regional autonomy, separatism, home rule, devolution, or whatever else it is called-has been accelerating in recent years. And this is happening in the face of the conventional wisdom that contemporary world problems require larger rather than smaller entities to cope with them. But wherever solutions are to be found, one lesson of the British devolution issue seems clear: internal threats to the modern state are no less immediate than external threats (Meadows 59)”, and failure to adjust to internal demands for reform is likely to produce political upheaval devolution.

“The suddenness of ethnic conflicts” helps to explain the lag in understanding them and their various factors. The development of nationalist movements throughout Western Europe and the world requires continuing research in the study of nationalist movements and provokes new discussions of action alternatives for separatist ethics in the future. The controversy of devolution has domestic and international implications. The trend toward regional autonomy has been accelerating in recent years and is therefore is practical in understanding the causes leading regional separatism.

While autonomy movements and ethno-cultural renaissances have reasonably good records of success actual separatist successes have been rare and are more the exception than the rule. However, this is due in part because the modern nation state and the larger international environment strongly discourage secessionism as opposed to limited autonomy. The ethnic nationalist movements in Spain and Scotland offer testimony to the process of going against the central government in the modern international political environment of Western Europe. The overarching purpose of this study has shown the ethnic link in the study of the roots of ethnic separatism and to international relations.

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