

STATE INTEGRATION VS. REGIONAL EXCEPTIONALISM

A EUROPEAN PREDICAMENT

by Bjarne Lindström

Europe is currently marked by social and economic turbulence, and recent developments have highlighted the fact that, fundamentally, the EU is composed of a number of sovereign member states that – when the chips are down – always tend to have their own best interests at heart.

However, there is also another aspect to the current political instability in Europe. Many of the Union's member states have one or more territories with inhabitants of a different ethnic, cultural, or linguistic background than the majority of the state's population. Several of these "regional deviants" are demanding increased political autonomy, in some cases even formal independence. This tends to generate a politically very sensitive conflict between two fundamental principles of international law – the right to self-determination of the peoples and the sovereign states' right to territorial integrity and cohesion.

TERRITORIAL GRASS-ROOTS movements questioning established state power structures and demanding greater self-determination currently exist in several EU states. Regional parties and organizations with increased autonomy or secession from their metropolitan states as their overall objectives are active in more than a third of the member states of the EU.¹ Most of these territorial movements have a positive view on the EU. The Union is considered an overarching political structure where the possibility to exercise influence is more substantial than at the member state level. An analysis of the tension between the member states and the growing regional demands for increased self-determination must therefore be regarded as an essential element of any qualified forecast of Europe's political future. Below – based on an extensive reading of relevant theoretical literature and recent European developments – an effort is made to contribute to the scholarly discussions of the future of European politics, with a special focus on how the member states handle their regional deviants.

The essay starts with an in-depth analysis of the political and

constitutional cornerstones on which the power of the modern state rests. The focus is on how these pillars of the European states affect their ability to manage culturally and linguistically deviant regions and territories. Various attempts to deal with the underlying conflict between the states' demands for territorial control and their deviant regions' desires for increased room for maneuver is analyzed. European examples of more or less successful solutions through the introduction of different forms and degrees of regional home-rule are highlighted and discussed. The essay concludes with a discussion of the EU's current position in the politically mined area between the seemingly incompatible demands of state territorial integrity and regional self-determination.

The territorial foundation of state power

The 19th-century French historian and philosopher Ernest Renan defined the "nation" as a territorially based collective endeavor – according to him, a popular movement encompassing the past, the present, and the future. Despite the hollow idealistic tendencies in Renan's "collective desire", he is not far from the more objective conclusion that the building of nations, and consequently also the building of states, above all can be defined as a project fundamentally governed by politics.²

The most important quality – the fundamental social substance, if you will – of this particularly extensive political project is the ambition to bring people, enterprises, and public institutions together in a geographically limited area in order to create a well-integrated community. Strictly speaking, successful state building requires the functional social, economic, and political integration of a politically defined territory. In other words, there is a strong *connection between state building, public power, and territorial integration*.

Ever since the birth of the modern state in the middle





ILLUSTRATION: KARIN SUNVISSON

of the 19th century³, history has shown that successful territorial integration politics – and, thus, the effective exercise of state power – is founded on the following three closely connected cornerstones:

- Territorial sovereignty
- A dominant standard of communication
- A geographically defined market/economy

The first of these three cornerstones of the modern state is basically unlimited political power over a territory with clearly marked borders on the map. This could be called the *territorial sovereignty condition* of state building. It is essential to note that the sovereignty condition applies to the coexistence of politics and territory that is of critical importance for maintaining state power. All forms of state sovereignty known today require a combination of political power and geographically delimited territories. Consequently, one of the most fundamental building blocks of the modern state is its exercise of political power in a territory controlled by the state itself.⁴

However, this does not mean that the central government “decides everything” within its territory. General territorial control by the state can very well coexist with parliamentary democracy and significant elements of delegated (decentralized) state power. The exercise of power by the modern state might work just as well – sometimes even better – when the responsibility for politics (not least at the operative level) is shared by several public actors and is allocated to different geographical and administrative levels.

An essential external, trans-state, side to territorial control as a condition for sovereignty is that the state in question is officially recognized by the international community, basically all the other sovereign states in the world. Because they all rest on the same fundamental principle of territorial control, this is a mutual confirmation of the legitimacy of an international system based on politically independent *territorial states*.⁵ It is important to realize that the primary issue is the political power over the territory, not the formal recognition.⁶ The basic requirement for international recognition is that the state fully controls its territory.⁷

THE SECOND CORNERSTONE of successful state building is the standardization of general means of communication within the state’s territory, in practice a common spoken and written language.

This is the fundamental *communication condition* of the modern state. The traditional model is the unitary state with a well-integrated territory and a population whose internal communication is dominated by a language that the majority of its citizens understand and can easily use in their everyday lives and work.⁸

This concerns not only the language as such, as a communication technique among others. Language standardization also results in a common “cultural code”⁹ with commonly accepted

social behavior patterns and ways to communicate, which are required for a well-integrated modern society. By extension, this generates the *common identity* that, regardless of its quite vague historical background, functions as the overall ideology central to the political legitimacy and survival of the modern state.¹⁰

The history of this political model, which in its most consistent form can be characterized by the device “one territory, one people and one language”,¹¹ is full of conflicts.¹² The national borders we take for granted today are generally the result of political developments where groups of people with various ethnic backgrounds and languages – often through wars and by force – have been separated into different states or merged into territorial entities where one language gradually has replaced the others as the common means of communication. The prevailing language is either the one spoken by the majority or is the language dominant among the power elite of the state in question.¹³

THE EXCEPTIONS to the main rule that the dominance of one language gradually grows over time are mainly the cases where the state is dominated by a number of equally strong languages, generally with a wider international status and usage. The typical European

exception proving the rule of language standardization¹⁴ within a state territory is the Swiss Federation with German, French, and Italian as dominant languages. Another exception is Belgium, where the two dominant languages of French and Dutch dominate in their respective regions and, simultaneously, are (competing) parallel languages at the federal level.¹⁵

The third cornerstone in the development of the modern state can be characterized as the *domestic market condition*. State policies and national economic legislation have resulted in geographically delimited markets for labor, goods, and services, which in practice promotes internal economic integration rather than trans-national interaction. One of the main tasks of the state borders is thus to create and delimit an integrated arena for entrepreneurship, production, and business. Accordingly, the state borders have significant economic and social protective effects,¹⁶ which is true also for states closely related with regard to culture, language, and economy, for example, the Nordic and Baltic countries.¹⁷

The interpretation of this is not that international interaction and integration is impossible. On the contrary, over the last decades several of the common measures taken by various states have aimed at reducing the barriers to economic integration created by national borders. The most ambitious international integration project of modern times is probably the foundation of the EU. The policies of the EU have mainly involved trans-state treaties and agreements to bridge some of the economic barriers created by state borders.¹⁸ However, not least the developments of recent years have highlighted the substantial difficulties and political barriers to a more extensive dismantling of the borders of the EU member states.¹⁹

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These three cornerstones of state power are intimately, or even inseparably, interwoven. *In practice, the fundamental political legitimacy of the modern state depends on a well-functioning interaction between them.* Without the territorially anchored state power, neither the standardization of a dominant means of communication (language, the most important cultural forms of expression) nor the establishment of an adequately united social and economic interaction is possible. Moreover, the common standard of communication is a requirement for the division of labor and an integrated internal labor market, which, in turn, requires a language that is understood and used in all parts of the state territory.²⁰

Minority legislation as assimilation strategy

Successful state building thus requires the ability to, in a politically defined territory, create and maintain the linguistically, socially, and culturally standardized means of communication on which the economy and labor market depend. In practice, the territorially and linguistically homogenous state is taken for granted as a fundamental norm and central building block in the political organization of modern society.

However, the reality “on the ground” does not always correspond with the ideal model. As a rule, the history of current states is – to varying degrees – rather turbulent with significant elements of military violence and great-power politics. *The finally established state borders therefore rarely coincide with the ethnic and/or linguistic geography.*

In many cases where an ethnic group has landed within the borders of a state dominated by a population of another ethnic, cultural, or linguistic background, integration has been successful despite initial conflicts and difficulties. In cases where the minority was relatively small and did not dominate in any specific part of the state territory, or was composed by groups of immigrants that had recently moved into the territory, the social integration and transition to the majority language have generally run relatively smoothly.

IN MORE COMPLICATED CASES, the integration policy has been supplemented by some form of public (national, not territorial) minority protection by allowing elementary education in the minority language and usage of the minority’s own language in contacts with public authorities.

However, simultaneously – and this is crucial – the minority in question *is subject to all the other territorial integration instruments of the modern state.* In practice, minority protection therefore works as a buffer with the effect that the assimilation of the deviant minority culture – including the transition to the majority language – is more gradual and socially and politically less challenging. In this way, the minority protection functions more

as a *smooth integration strategy* than as a serious attempt to stop the development towards a dominant language communication standard within the state territory.²¹

When state integration policy fails

In some cases this type of minority integration has not been possible, or at least has been very difficult to put into practice in a successful way. Three typical cases can be identified.

The first case is where a number of ethnic groups with different languages or historical backgrounds have been brought together in the same state territory. If there is a sufficient number of these groups and they are of relatively equal weight (with regard to language and/or policy impact) as well as concentrated in different parts of the state territory, it will be difficult to put one of these languages ahead of the others in the way required for successful state-led linguistic integration. A typical example is when the former European colonial powers drew artificial borders in the Middle East with ethnic, religious, and language

conflicts as a consequence. Another example is the Balkans, where, in the 1990s, the complicated ethnic and linguistic composition of the Yugoslav state territory instigated military violence ethnic cleansing.

The second case concerns ethnic groups with their own historical territory and language in a state dominated by another language. These peoples and ethnic groups are often called *stateless nations*. Familiar examples are the Basque Country,

Kurdistan, and the Faroe Islands.²² This category also includes peoples and nations that, for various reasons, have lost a previously established political independence. European examples are Catalonia, Scotland, and Wales. In these cases, the history of the ethnic group in combination with its deviant culture and/or language has made the usual state integration instruments difficult to apply.

THE THIRD CASE involves the border territories where war and international treaties have separated the population from the states and language areas to which they historically belonged. This often generates similar social and linguistic tensions in relation to the majority people as in the case of the stateless nations. Typical examples in Europe are the Åland Islands (on the wrong side of the border between Sweden and Finland), South Tyrol (on the wrong side of the border between Austria and Italy), and the Hungarian minority in Transylvania (on the wrong side of the border between Hungary and Romania).²³

It must be noted that the three cases mentioned above frequently overlap. The situation of the Middle East and the Kurds in Turkey are illustrative examples of this. The ambitions of the separatist movements that tend to emerge in these kinds of politically contested milieus change depending on which of the above-discussed case/cases dominates. Thus, regarding the

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stateless nations (e.g. Catalonia, Scotland, and the Faroe Islands/Greenland) the separatism is mainly expressed as *secessionism* and the ambition to establish a new state. In the cases where the background is an “incorrect” drawing of the state borders (e.g. the Åland Islands and South Tyrol), political ambitions generally tend to have an element of *irredentism*, a desire to move the state border in order to allow the minority people in question to reunite with the state to which they feel they belong with regard to ethnicity and/or language.

It is not possible to rate these two types of separatism on the traditional right-left scale of politics in an unambiguous way. In practice, the rating must be made separately in each case depending on the social composition and political traditions of the territory in question as well as the overall political context.²⁴

Two conflict-management models: Federation and regional autonomy

The various attempts to politically manage the three main types of nonconformity between the cultural/language identity of an ethnic group and the territorial state to which it belongs are generally based on one of the following two state-building strategies:

- A territorially decentralized distribution of public power in accordance with federal principles
- An introduction of regional autonomy (self-government) for the ethnic groups deviating from the majority population

The federal structures in the first of these two strategies include the whole state territory. Generally, all the regions of the federation have the same type and degree of political autonomy.²⁵ Nevertheless, the extent of the autonomy varies considerably between different federal states. In some cases, the federation is a rather vague political union/association where the member states of the federation are relatively free to determine the conditions for their membership, including a possible withdrawal from the union.²⁶ However, in most cases it is about state formations with a strong federal level and, consequently, a more limited delegation of legislative power to the underlying regional level. European examples are the federal states of Austria and Germany.

The federal strategy for the management of the territorial cohesion policy is, in practice, often the only possible alternative in cases where the territory accommodates several different, relatively equally-sized language groups with a strong territorial connection – i.e. the first of the above-discussed cases of disconformity between language/ethnicity and political territory. Therefore, federal solutions were common in the building of new multi-ethnic states that took place in connection with the dissolution of the empires of the European colonial powers after World War II (1945–ca 1970), in Asia (e.g. India), and in Africa (e.g. Nigeria).

In these newly formed multi-ethnic federations, the language of the former colonial power usually becomes the common communi-

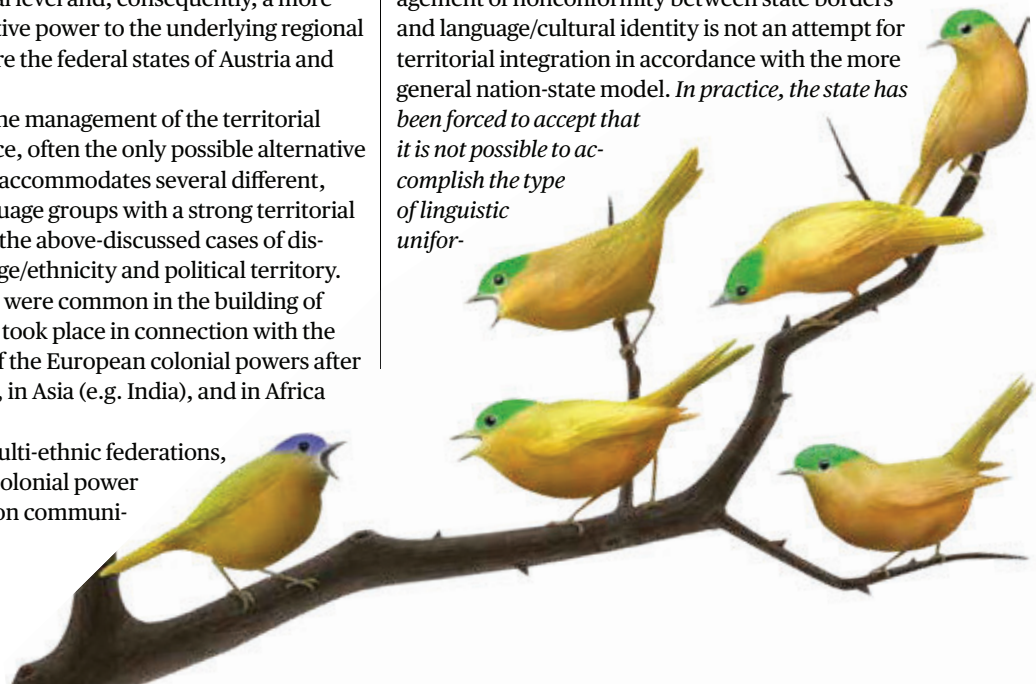
cation standard – generally complemented with one or some of the many local languages. Furthermore, there is often a constitutionally secured regulation of the distribution of the federal power positions between the largest and most influential language groups. Consequently, the Indian as well as the Nigerian main official language is English with some of the larger local languages as a supplementary communication standard.²⁷

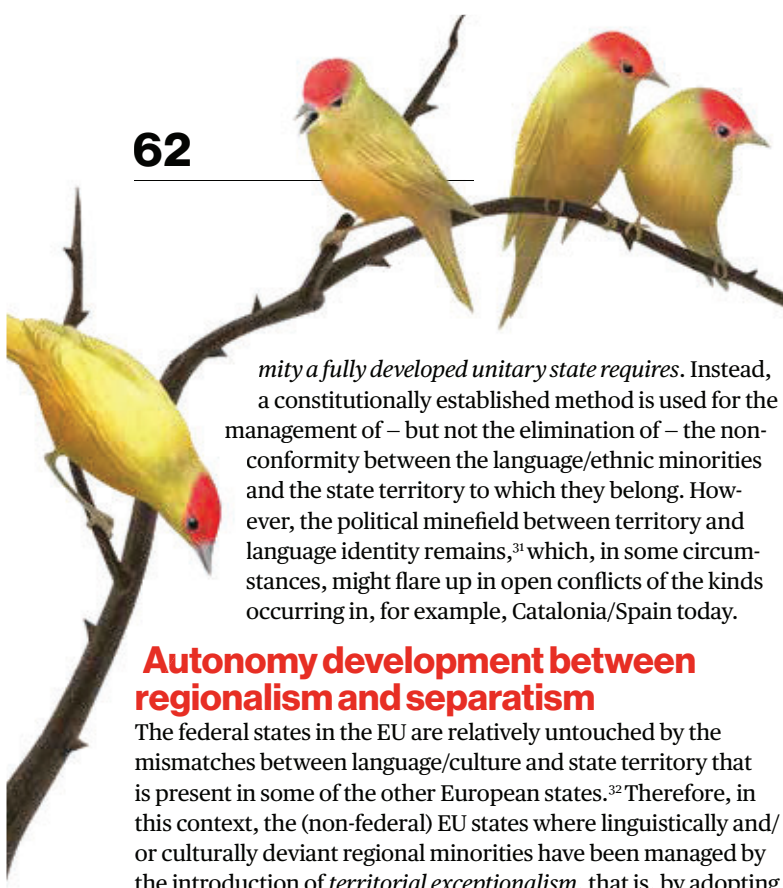
IT MUST, HOWEVER, be noted that federal state-building strategies have also been successful without colonial interference and/or where conflicts between various language groups have been completely absent or have only played a marginal political role. Generally, this applies to vast territories that are successively occupied by colonists from other parts of the world (e.g. the USA, Australia, and Brazil) or to federal states established by the voluntary unification of a number of independent regions/states with the same language, e.g. Germany and Austria.²⁸

If the federal state thus requires a dual political structure encompassing all of the state territory, the state-building strategies resulting in some form of political self-rule for limited parts of the territory are characterized by what might be called *territorial exceptionalism*.²⁹ This particular solution is useful when, within a state’s territory, there is a relatively homogenous language majority as well as one or more historically and territorially well-anchored minorities with deviant languages, ethnicities, and cultures.³⁰

The establishment of home-rule for a limited part of a state territory can be considered an attempt at political management of the second (stateless nations) and the third (wrong side of the border) of the above-discussed cases of nonconformity between language/ethnicity and political territory. Generally, the result is a unitary state (one country with one dominant language) but with one or more *regional exceptions* entrusted with varying degrees of political autonomy and an official language deviant from the one used in the rest of the state territory.

It is important to keep in mind that the ambition of these two main types (federation, regional autonomy) of political management of nonconformity between state borders and language/cultural identity is not an attempt for territorial integration in accordance with the more general nation-state model. *In practice, the state has been forced to accept that it is not possible to accomplish the type of linguistic uniform-*





mity a fully developed unitary state requires. Instead, a constitutionally established method is used for the management of – but not the elimination of – the non-conformity between the language/ethnic minorities and the state territory to which they belong. However, the political minefield between territory and language identity remains,³¹ which, in some circumstances, might flare up in open conflicts of the kinds occurring in, for example, Catalonia/Spain today.

Autonomy development between regionalism and separatism

The federal states in the EU are relatively untouched by the mismatches between language/culture and state territory that is present in some of the other European states.³² Therefore, in this context, the (non-federal) EU states where linguistically and/or culturally deviant regional minorities have been managed by the introduction of *territorial exceptionalism*, that is, by adopting some form of regional autonomy, are far more interesting.

The sustainability of regional autonomy as a constitutional solution to politically unwieldy divergences between language, culture, history, and state territory depends on three central background factors, namely:

- The extent and depth of the autonomy
- The weight of the population and the economy of the autonomous region
- The origin and geopolitical context of the autonomy

These three background factors are important to keep in mind when observing the European autonomies in a long-term perspective. In fact, the combination of these factors decides where in the political minefield between *regionalism* (decentralization, subsidiarity) and *separatism* (secessionism/irredentism) the political dynamics of the autonomous region have their main driving forces.³³ Hence, there is reason to examine how these three factors influence the political stability of the regional autonomies and their metropolitan states – which, by extension, also affects political developments at the EU level.

Room for maneuver

Experience shows that a regional autonomy granted insufficient legal room for maneuver³⁴ tends to generate gradually increasing discontent and tension in the relations between the autonomy and the metropolitan state. Examples of this are South Tyrol/Italy and Catalonia/Spain, as well as the Åland Islands/Finland.

The autonomy Italy offered South Tyrol after the end of World War II was so incomplete that it generated substantial discontent among the German-speaking population of the region. This resulted in bomb attacks in the 1950s and 1960s on Italian institutions and authorities. After international mediation, Italy was finally forced in 1972 to offer South Tyrol an extended auton-

omy that initiated more positive political developments. Since 2015, a political process has been underway intending to further strengthen the autonomy, which is no longer considered to correspond to current demands and requirements. In other words, the positive development of the political room for maneuver has resulted in a more solid and non-confrontational relationship between the autonomy and the Italian state than during previous periods with more limited autonomy.³⁵

Today, a more current and internationally noted example is Catalonia, which, since the turn of the millennium, has with growing political intensity demanded the reformation of its autonomy, which was established after the fall of the Franco dictatorship. The discontent in Catalonia concerns several restrictive elements in the regulations of the competence areas of the autonomy, including the lack of legislative power regarding the taxation of the region's residents and enterprises.³⁶ However, the language issue is also an element of the conflict involving an ongoing tug-of-war between Spanish and Catalan as the dominant language in the region.³⁷ In the fall of 2017, the refusal of the Spanish state to accept a political and legal upgrade of the Catalan autonomy resulted in a semi-official declaration of independence and a political and constitutional conflict with repercussions also at the EU level.³⁸

THE ÅLAND ISLANDS is a similar case, although considerably less observed internationally. The autonomy of the islands was established by Finland in the beginning of the 1920s in order to prevent the reunion with Sweden that was desired by the population.³⁹ Due to the strong focus on the Swedish language of the population, the introduced self-government can be regarded as a form of territorial language protection rather than a fully developed political autonomy.⁴⁰ This has generated recurrent tension and conflicts between the Finnish state and the autonomy. In recent years, the discontent in the Åland Islands, not the least due to the autonomy's limited say on the region's economy and taxation (cf. Catalonia), has been intensified by Finnish legislation initiatives with a tendency to further reduce the economic-political space of the autonomy. The climate has not improved by the essentially restrictive Finnish treatment of a proposal for a substantial modernization and development of the autonomy initiated (2012–2013) by the Åland Islands.⁴¹

Typical of the more extensive European autonomies is their significant legislative competence and wide room for maneuver regarding important internal policy areas such as social legislation, labor law, labor market regulation, economic regulation, taxation, etc. The political responsibility and decision-making power of the metropolitan host-state mainly includes human and social rights, currency, military defense, and similar questions – that is, policy areas that tend to be regulated in some form of overarching trans-national context (EU, NAFTA, the European Central Bank, NATO, etc.).

Examples of these types of more qualified autonomies are Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Both of the two Danish autonomies in the Northern Atlantic have extensive home-rule, including the acceptance of the Danish state to – if a majority of

the population so wishes – freely choose to withdraw from the Danish Kingdom and establish their own sovereign states. They receive substantial economic support from Denmark and, simultaneously, control essentially all legislation on public finances, taxation, and enterprises – including the right to conclude international treaties in these policy areas. The two autonomies are members of several UN bodies and international organizations, above all concerning maritime law, fisheries, and shipping. Moreover, despite the Danish EU membership, they are not members of the EU.⁴² Characteristic of the two Danish autonomies is thus their control over the public decision-making system and the administrative machinery that play decisive roles for language development in a politically defined territory. Hence, the threat against the regional languages (Faroese and Greenlandic) as dominant means of communication is non-existent. The result is a more relaxed and conflict-free political relationship between the autonomies and their host-state.

IN ADDITION, A MORE extensive and well-developed autonomy generates a positive social and political dynamic that tends to be weaker in the cases where the regional autonomy is more limited and focused on language protection. Instead, in these cases the politics tend to be “introverted” and limited to the policy area where the essence of the autonomy lies – hence, in the relationship between the culture and language of the majority population and the deviant culture and language of the region.⁴³ Generally, politics in autonomies with more extensive political room for maneuver is more mature, although with underlying secessionist dynamics that in some circumstances might stimulate separatist movements.

Weight of population and economy

Another central background factor is the size of the autonomous region in terms of its population, economy, and territory. Experience shows that the “size factor” is essential for the political development of a regional autonomy. Typical examples of the effects of size and political weight are the Åland Islands and the Faroe Islands in contrast to Scotland and Catalonia.

The two Nordic autonomies, both with populations of fewer than 50,000 persons, can hardly be considered substantial or vital parts of the populations of their respective metropolitan states (Finland, Denmark). And although the Faroe Islands and the Åland Islands are well-developed economies with high per capita production values, they play only marginal roles in the Finnish and Danish macro-economies. Additionally, their geographical characteristics as insular island communities contribute to their minor political weight.

An extensive regional autonomy, or even the establishment of a micro-state, can hardly be considered to pose a serious threat to the survival of Denmark or Finland as sovereign and, in all other respects, territorially well-integrated states. Consequently,

small scale tends to create increased political space for regional home-rule. The size of the region in relation to the metropolitan state is thus of substantial – in some cases decisive – importance as to what policy limitations the state in question imposes on the development of the autonomy. This general conclusion, however, is not valid in all specific cases, which is apparent from the differences between the extensions and depths of the autonomies of the Åland Islands and the Faroe Islands described above. In this context, the third important background factor (the origin and geopolitical context) is an essential component. In this respect, the Åland Islands are in a considerably more unfavorable position than the Faroe Islands, to which we will return below.

ONE OF THE THINGS shared by the two small Nordic autonomies is, however, a substantial hesitation about their possibilities, considering their “smallness”, to secede from their current metropolitan states. This is a common quality – although with great variations with regard to the political consequences – of many of the smaller autonomies. Consequently, the rather

limited support for secessionist movements in many of these autonomies can be explained by the modest sizes of their populations and economies.⁴⁴ Although the “smallness” is favorable to the host-state’s acceptance of a relatively extensive autonomy, the small scale tends to reduce the political space for regional independence movements.⁴⁵

The political conditions of the European autonomies with more sizable populations and economies are substantially different from the type of small-scale island autonomies that the Åland Islands and the Faroe Islands represent. Adequate examples are, as already mentioned, Scotland and Catalonia. With population sizes corresponding to a small European state (about 5.3 and 7.5 million inhabitants, respectively) and with a substantial part of the state territory (the UK and Spain, respectively), their political weights can hardly be considered marginal. This is true also for their economic positions, not the least regarding Catalonia whose economy accounts for twenty percent of the Spanish economy.

Because of the importance and weight of Catalonia and Scotland in their respective states, their constitutional status and political room for maneuver cannot be considered marginal questions for the Spanish and British states. Consequently, all attempts at more extensive changes in the room for maneuver of these two autonomies become critically important policy issues at the state level. Therefore, autonomies with substantial weight in their respective host-states are usually met with heavy resistance against any development towards political autonomy that is considered too extensive. The greater the economic importance and political weight of the region, the greater the resistance will be – of which the infected relationship between Catalonia and the Spanish state is a good example.

“EXAMPLES OF THESE TYPES OF MORE QUALIFIED AUTONOMIES ARE GREENLAND AND THE FAROE ISLANDS.”

At the same time, it is apparent that a large population and a considerable economic capacity generally have the opposite impact in the autonomy in question. Here, the size factor tends to generate public pressure for more extensive home-rule. A size comparable to one of the smaller European states dramatically raises the appetite for greater political space for maneuver, which – if the political conditions are right – can result in growing demands for full independence.

Therefore, the long-term development – and the political sustainability – of regional autonomies with substantial populations and economic weight such as the Basque Country, Catalonia, Scotland, and Flanders strongly depend on a harmonious relationship between the metropolitan state and the autonomy. The key is how the state handles the situation. If it does not possess the flexibility and political maturity required for handling the intricate balance between regionalism and separatism, it risks escalating political and constitutional crises as well as growing demands for independence.

Origin and geopolitical context

The third important background factor is the historical origin of the autonomous territory and its role in the overall economic and geopolitical priorities of its host-state. Here, the historical background of the metropolitan state itself generally plays a significant part. In older, well-established states, and especially those used to (often as a consequence of decolonization) the management of territories with deviant constitutional status and various degrees of home-rule, relatively free political reins are generally offered.⁴⁶ In these cases, the autonomy is often based on a voluntary decentralization of state power. The most typical European example of this approach is probably the United Kingdom (Scotland), but Denmark can also be considered as having the same kind of more liberal and permissive view of its two north Atlantic autonomies (the Faroe Islands and Greenland).

In relatively newly formed states, or states with a conflict-ridden history, the political attitude towards the autonomous region is, as a rule, more restrictive. The relationship between the metropolitan state (majority language) and the autonomy (deviant language/ethnicity) tends to be more negative. In a European context, Spain (Catalonia and the Basque Country) and Finland (the Åland Islands) – states otherwise completely different regarding history and political culture – can be seen as examples of this kind of more restrictive state policy in relation to their autonomous territories.

THE HISTORY OF modern Spain began in the mid-1970s when the dictatorship of Franco was dismantled. The strained relationship between the Spanish state and the Catalan autonomy originates from the political assaults and state-sanctioned violence that have characterized the management of the linguistically and culturally deviant Catalan part of the Spanish state territory, not only

in the Franco-era, but also significantly further back in time.⁴⁷ Neither does the background history of the Finnish state in all respects favor a non-confrontational development of the Åland autonomy. Finland is a young sovereign state with a past history as an integrated part of two dominating neighboring states, Sweden and Russia. The origin of the Åland autonomy as a result of the desire of the population to reunite with Sweden, and their unwillingness to be a part of the Finnish republic established in 1917/1918, still has a negative impact on the relationship between the Åland Islands and Finland.⁴⁸

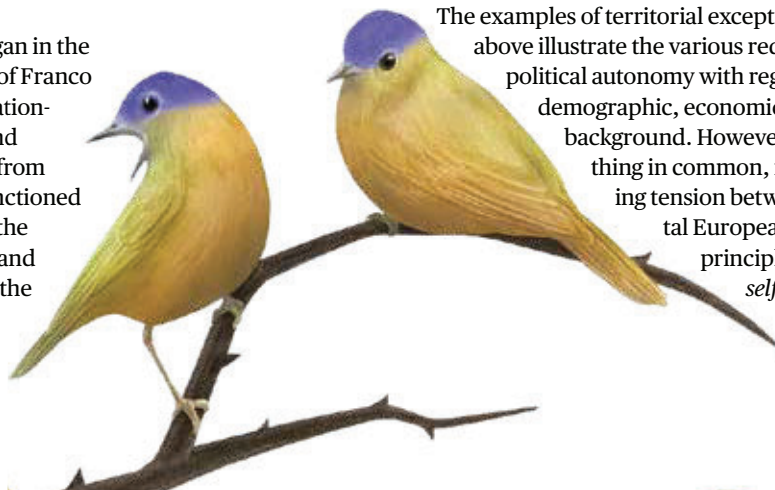
In the case of Åland, the situation is further complicated due to the fact that the archipelago, as a result of an international treaty (1856), is a demilitarized zone where all military facilities and other permanent military activities are banned.⁴⁹ Paradoxically, the limited military sovereignty of Finland concerning the Åland part of its territory has not contributed to an extension of the room for maneuver of the autonomy, especially not in the policy areas affecting the foreign policy prerogatives of the Finnish state.

In other words, an autonomous region should not be considered a problem by its host state or, even worse, pose some sort of threat to its security policy and/or military interests due to its geographical position or geopolitical role. If this is the case, the relationship between the autonomy and the state runs the risk of continuous disputes and political tension. Generally, this is true regardless of the size and weight of the autonomous territory.

In cases where the autonomous territory cannot be considered a national liability, but rather an economic or geopolitical asset, the situation is different. This applies to several of the British autonomies, for example, Gibraltar, the Isle of Man, and the Channel Islands. In some respects, their role in the international economy is favorable to influential British financial interests, which is likely to have contributed to their non-confrontational relationship with London.⁵⁰ To some extent, a similar “national advantage” applies to the two Danish autonomies, whose positions in the Northern Atlantic add to the weight of Denmark in NATO.⁵¹ In these types of autonomous territories, the policy of the metropolitan state in relation to its autonomy often tends to be relatively allowing, attempting to secure the international legal position of the autonomy rather than undermining and limiting its room for maneuver.

Challenged state nationalism

The examples of territorial exceptionalism discussed above illustrate the various requirements of a political autonomy with regard to historical, demographic, economic, and geopolitical background. However, they all have one thing in common, namely the underlying tension between two fundamental European and international principles of law: *the right to self-determination of the peoples* (including



the right to establish their own states) vs. *the right to territorial integrity of the states*.⁵²

In the ideal model world on which the European national state ideology is essentially still based, the people (*demos*) and the state territory coincide, and thus this tension is not a problem. In the cases where the state territory also includes regions with deviant language and identity of its population (i.e. in practice several *demos*), a conflict between the principle of the right to self-determination and the principle of the state territorial integrity might arise. The introduction of regional autonomy can be seen as an attempt to handle this conflict.

However, *the underlying tension between the two internationally accepted principles of law remains*. Therefore, separatist demands based on the principle of the right to self-determination can never be ruled out, which is confirmed by the political development of some of the European autonomies in recent years. All other things being equal, secessionist movements with significant public legitimacy are most likely to appear in cases where the metropolitan state shows a lack of respect for the *territorial identity* of the minority and thus is unable to handle the conflict between the two overarching principles of international law by means of political dialogue, flexibility, and mutual understanding.

Today, several of the European states are struggling with the consequences of their inadequate ability to manage the demands for increased political self-determination of their regional minorities. This especially applies to centrally governed states where the connection between state, nation (national language), and territory constitutes the very foundation of all state policies. In reality, the European states are usually characterized by a nation state focus so fundamental that the 19th-century nationalism on which this “state fixation” is based disappears into an ideologically misty background. *The right of the state to territorial cohesion is so taken for granted that the underlying nationalism is disregarded*. It is not exposed until it is challenged by ethnic groups unwilling to yield to the required cultural standardization and territorial integration – which is becoming increasingly common in Europe today.

THE MEMBER PARTIES of the European Free Alliance (EFA), which functions as an umbrella organization for the regional movements in Europe aiming for increased political autonomy or independence, has thus grown from eight at the time of its establishment in the beginning of the 1980s to as many as thirty-eight members today (2017).⁵³ Furthermore, active independence movements have grown stronger in several places around Europe. The most influential and internationally best known are probably Scotland, Catalonia, and Flanders. There are independence movements with divergent ambitions and political weight also in the Basque Country, Wales, the Faroe Islands, Greenland,

the Åland Islands, Galicia, Lombardy, and Veneto to mention some of the European examples.

The latest sign of the gradually growing strength of the demands for regional self-determination is the result of the recent regional elections in Corsica in December 2017. An alliance of parties with the overriding objective of a more developed autonomy (including a formal recognition of Corsican as an official language) received as much as fifty-six percent of the votes and thus for the first time an absolute majority in the regional assembly.⁵⁴

IN FACT, THE NATION-STATE ideology has been so dominating that the growing demands around Europe for extended regional self-determination have come as a complete surprise. The fact that the emerging regional movements have not corresponded to mainstream perceptions of provincialism, right-wing extremism,

and anti-internationalism has made it even more difficult for established politicians and scholars to understand recent European developments. Demands for extended regional room for maneuver, in some cases even full formal independence, tend to come from political movements and parties to the left or in the middle of the political spectrum. Nor has the understanding been facilitated by the fact that the actors behind the quest for increased

political autonomy or full independence generally are in favor of open international borders and an extended European cooperation – while the political resistance against increased regional autonomy often stems from strongly nationalistic and populist right-wing circles critical of the EU and “globalization”.⁵⁵

A union made by territorial states

Today, the EU is, at least potentially, the most suited actor to handle the conflict between the right to self-determination and the right to state territorial integrity and cohesion. By formally recognizing its regional deviants and granting them a more significant role in the decision-making bodies (the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament), most of the movements aiming for extended regional autonomy would probably not develop towards secessionism. In the EU regions where support for secessionism is strong enough to be seen as a legitimate demand for independence in accordance with established international law and right to self-determination, a well-functioning European trans-state political level would probably also be able to offer a constitutional framework for a smooth establishment of new member states.

However, there are no signs that the EU is prepared to shoulder this essential role for the future of Europe. The development at the Union level has rather gone in the opposite direction. The “blindness” to the regional level in the institutions of the former European Economic Community, which was criticized as early as the 1960s and 1970s,⁵⁶ still exists in the EU today.

The expectations that the introduction of *the principle of sub-*

“SEPARATIST DEMANDS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF THE RIGHT TO SELF DETERMINATION CAN NEVER BE RULED OUT.”

subsidiarity and the establishment of the *European Committee of the Regions* in the beginning of the 1990s⁵⁷ would initiate a process giving the regions, and not the least those with some form of political autonomy, a stronger voice in the decision-making bodies of the Union have not been fulfilled. In practice, the principle of subsidiarity is an abstract principle that, if it is regarded at all, mostly tends to be used as an argument for a stronger member state level at the cost of the Union level. The European Committee of the Regions is, as a result of its composition (non-autonomous regions and local/municipal authorities dominate) and its limited role in the Union's decision-making bodies, a disappointment to those who have argued for a development of the EU towards a union of the regions and the peoples rather than an association of sovereign states.⁵⁸

The disappointment is most visible in the territories and regions where the majority population has a different language and/or ethnic identity than "its" member state. But this also applies to federal and autonomous regions with few language deviations that have seen their political room for maneuver diminish when legislative areas have been moved from their authority to the Union level even as they have not been allowed to take part in the decision-making processes of the EU. Because only the member states are full members of the decision-making bodies of the EU (e.g. the Council of Ministers) and other institutions of more weight (e.g. the European Court of Human Rights), paradoxically, the development of the EU has resulted in a stronger member state level at the cost of federal and autonomous regions.⁵⁹

THE DOMINANCE OF the member states at the Union level is accentuated when the policy relates to the linchpins of their power, i.e. the cornerstones of the European state-building in the 19th and 20th century discussed earlier in this text. Thus, the already strong position of the member states at the Union level is, unsurprisingly, significantly strengthened where their territorial integrity and internal cohesion are concerned.⁶⁰ The conflict between the Catalan autonomy and the Spanish state that, in recent years, has escalated and become ever more infectious, illustrates this fact. While the representatives of the Union sharply condemn the member states of Poland and Hungary for neither fulfilling the demands for freedom and human rights in their legislation nor separating between policy and law in the way required by the EU treaties, they accept the same type of restrictions on human rights imposed by the Spanish state.⁶¹

Spain being a political actor of significantly more weight in the Union than Poland and Hungary is, of course, of some importance here. But the more fundamental difference is that the Polish and Hungarian measures do not apply to the issue of state territorial integrity, which is a very sensitive question for all member states and is an issue that the Catalan independence movement openly challenges. *From the harsh perspective of state survival, the need to secure the principle of territorial sovereignty is more important than the principle of democracy and human*

rights. Therefore, none of the member states are prepared to seriously challenge the Spanish position on Catalonia, which is reflected in the official position and policy of the Union.

Europe – Quo Vadis?

As demonstrated above, there is a significant discrepancy between the political potential of the EU and its actual position and role in the future development of Europe. In practice, the member states have maintained their power monopoly in the most essential policy areas. Particularly in the most recent years, the member states have shown that they do not hesitate to disregard well-motivated EU policies and EU legislation as soon as these are considered to conflict with their own interests, which has been characteristic of the management of non-European refugees and the European cooperation in defense and security policy.

Paradoxically, as a result of the weak position of the Union concerning major political and social challenges that can be handled successfully only at the European level, the EU policy is currently characterized by short-sighted regulation of, from the point of view of the member states, less sensitive policy areas – in practice, various types of everyday life issues that are not well-suited for European regulation.

*The consequence is a Union characterized by repeated failures concerning the really important international and European policy challenges, while the citizens consider it a faceless Brussels-administration unnecessarily interfering in their local affairs.*⁶²

Europe is facing substantial challenges that can be met only by the strengthening of European decision-making in combination with reduced regulation and extended room for maneuver at the regional and local levels. The numerous EU-positive regional autonomies and stateless peoples demanding political recognition and increased self-determination are important co-actors in such a development of the Union. In relation to their demands for extended autonomy, a more open and inclusive Europe would be likely to eliminate much of the democratic deficit that according to many assessors currently characterizes the EU.⁶³ Unfortunately, it is apparent that the member states of the EU are far from the political maturity necessary to give the Union the decision-making capacity required to successfully meet the significant territorial, social, and economic challenges faced by Europe today. ✖

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references

- 1 Finland (the Åland Islands), Denmark (the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the United Kingdom (Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland), Belgium (Flanders), France (Brittany and Corsica), Italy (South Tyrol, Lombardy, Veneto, Sicily, and Sardinia), the Czech Republic (Moravia and Silesia), Poland (Upper Silesia), Croatia (Istria), Germany (Bavaria), and Romania (the Székely Land/Transylvania). However, it should be noted that the political strength of these movements varies greatly.



- 2 E. Renan, "What is a Nation?" in *Nationalism in Europe: From 1815 to the Present. A Reader*, eds. S. Woolf, (Abingdon: Tylor & Francis, 1995/1882). According to Renan, the collective forgetfulness, or even the falsification of history, plays a significant role in the successful building of a state.
- 3 For an overview of the academic literature on the European state-building process, see M. Hroch, *European Nations. Explaining Their Formation*, (London: Verso, 2015). For a historical perspective on the establishment of states, see C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States AD 990–199*. (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993).
- 4 Jones identifies the roots of the modern state in the development of the medieval monarchies towards an increasingly "territorial-bound" exercise of power. R. Jones, "The Mechanics of Medieval State Formations: Observations from Wales", *Space & Polity*, 3:1, (1999): 85 – 100.
- 5 The most accurate overall term for the sovereign states existing today is *territorial* state rather than *nation* state (also called unitary state). The latter covers the limited group of states where nationality (ethnicity/ language) and state territory actually coincide. See, B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalis* (Norfolk: Verso Press, 1983); E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality*, (Cambridge: Canto Press, 1991) and Hroch (2015).
- 6 Formally, international recognition is not a necessary requirement for "statehood". In accordance with the international Montevideo Convention on Statehood, the decisive requirements are the capacity and ability to establish formal connections to other states, which does not necessarily require general international recognition. In accordance with the convention, the two other requirements of statehood are a permanently resident population in a limited territory and a government responsible for this territory and its people. See J. W. Davids, "What Makes a State?" *The New International Law*, May (2012); N. Levrat, S. Antunes, G. Tusseau, & P. Williams, *Catalonia's Legitimate Right to Decid*. (Genova: University of Genova, 2017.)
- 7 This has stopped a more general international recognition of an independent Palestinian state. On the other hand, there are several states around the world that – albeit extremely authoritarian regimes and human rights violators – are recognized by the states of the world referring to "facts on the ground", in other words, because they control their state territories.
- 8 K. W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and social communication. An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, (1953). Deutsch identified the nation (not the state) as a group of individuals whose members are able to communicate with each other with "greater complexity and intensity than with members of other groups". Earlier, in 1951, Hanna Arendt pointed out that a culturally and linguistically "homogenous population /is/ the most important prerequisite for evolution into a /modern/ nation-state", see H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harvest Books, 1951/1976, 42). A common language is still the most emphasized and also the highest-valued element of national identity. In accordance with an extensive survey by the American Pew Research Center, a common language is ranked at the top of the list of national identity factors in all of the fifteen countries involved in the investigation, see Stokes, B. *What It Takes to Truly Be One of Us*. (American Pew Research Center, 2017). Available at: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/02/01/what-it-takes-to-truly-be-one-of-us/>.
- 9 M. Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy. Social Poetics in the Nation-State*, (New York: Routledge, 2005). Herzfeld offers an in-depth analysis of the significance of the common cultural code ("cultural intimacy") for successful state-building. In accordance with the above-mentioned Pew Research Center study, the factor "sharing national customs and traditions" ranked second after the common language. Place of birth and religion came significantly further down in the list of the most important national identity factors.
- 10 The development of this type of nationalism and linguistically relatively homogenous territorial states is more closely analyzed by Arendt (1951); Hobsbawm (1991); Anderson (1983) and E. Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (London: Hutchinson & Co Ltd, 1960); A. Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, (Oxford: Polity Press, 1995); A.D. Smith, *National Identity*, (London: Penguin Books, 1991). It is important to note that this does not mean that the modern states lack language minorities, some of them even with strong territorial ties. For criticism against the tendency to equate (territorial-) state and nation, see D. Cannadine, *The Undivided Past. History Beyond our Differences*, (London: Penguin Books, 2013).
- 11 In her classic study of the totalitarian state, Arendt (1951/1976, 232) has characterized this connection as "the western national trinity of people-territory-state". Thereby, according to Arendt, the ideological core of the political organization of the modern state is a fundamental refusal to accept "nations within the nation" (p. 11).
- 12 For an analysis of how different historical and linguistic-ethnic perspectives have influenced and shaped the features of the state-building projects resulting in today's European states, see Hroch (2015). A readable overview of the political management of the lack of consistency between languages and state borders in 20th-century Europe is found in T. Lundén, "Language, Ethnicity and Boundary Changes in 20th Century Europe", in *Border Changes in 20th Century Europe. Tartu Studies in Contemporary History*, eds, E. Medjainen and O. Mertelmann, Vol. 1, (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2010).
- 13 In democratic states, these two alternatives mostly coincide. For a formalized analysis of the development of super- and subordinated languages (H- and L-languages) in the establishment of a dominating "national language", see J. A. Fishman, *Language in Sociocultural Change*, (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1972).
- 14 The standardization concerns only the dominating *internal* means of communication. This does not rule out knowledge in foreign languages and linguistic fragmentation through immigration and groups of people that recently moved into the state.
- 15 The third and significantly smaller (official) language group is the German speakers with less than 1% of the population.
- 16 See for example B. Lindström, "Towards a Post-Sovereign Political Landscape?" in *Dependency, Autonomy, Sustainability in the Arcti*, eds, H. Petersen and B. Poppel, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999).
- 17 See for example B. Lindström, *Gränslösa affärer? En intervjuaserad studie av den norsk-svenska gränshindersorganisationens samarbetspotential och framtida utvecklingsmöjligheter*. [Business without borders? A study based on interviews concerning possible collaboration and future development among organization dealing with Swedish trade barriers] (Hamar & Karlstad: INTERREG Norge-Sverige 2014–2020, 2017).
- 18 In the Nordic cooperation, a certain "border service" has been established to identify various types of trade barriers (and to initiate measures to dismantle/reduce them) as well as to inform private individuals and enterprises in how to manage existing border barriers. In the EU, the corresponding service is called SOLVIT.
- 19 Some recent and much noted, but not exclusive, examples of the increased emphasis on national borders functioning as "protective barriers" are the ever more protectionist trade policy of the USA and the United Kingdom leaving the EU (Brexit).
- 20 The division of labor resulting from the breakthrough of industrialism required a means of communication that was commonly accepted and used, in practice a common language: *La langue du pain*, "the language of labor", according to Hroch (2015). For a classic analysis of the connection between the breakthrough of industrialism and the growth and standardization of dominating state languages, see E. Gellner, *Culture, Identity, and Politics*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1987); E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

- 21 Consequently, Arendt (1951/1976, 272) characterizes the different types of minority treaties negotiated in Europe after World War I as a “painless and humane method of assimilation”.
- 22 This category may, with some reservation, include many of the so-called indigenous peoples (the Inuit, the Saami, etc.).
- 23 Belgium is a special case where, in the 19th century, a part of the Dutch (Flanders) and French (Wallonia) language groups were separated from the then Netherlands (Spanish Netherlands). In the beginning of the 1990s, the tension between the two relatively equal-sized language groups led to the transformation of Belgium into a semi-federal state with very extensive political autonomy for Flanders and Wallonia, see M. Berhoumi, “Wallonia”, in *The Emergence of a Democratic Right to Self-Determination in Europe*, eds. D. Turp & M. Sanjaume-Calvet, (Brussels: Centre Maurits Coppieters, 2016).
- 24 In Flanders and Lombardy/Veneto, the separatist movement is run by right-wing parties. In Catalonia and the Faroe Islands, the demands for independence are upheld by center- and left-wing parties. The corresponding independence party in the Åland Islands rates somewhere just to the right of the center of the political scale. For a more thorough analysis of the political background and origin of the European independence movements and parties, see E. Massetti, “Explaining Regionalist Party Positioning in a Multi-Dimensional Ideological Space: A Framework for Analysis”, *Regional and Federal Studies*, 19:4–5 (2009): 501–531.
- 25 However, there are exceptions known as asymmetric federalism, for example, in Belgium, Canada, and India. In these cases, the different federal states or autonomous regions have various degrees of independence.
- 26 For a presentation of different federal structures and their constitutional anchorage, see R.L. Watts, “Islands in Comparative Constitutional Perspective”, in *Lessons from the Political Economy of Small Islands. The Resourcefulness of Jurisdiction*, eds., G. Baldacchino and D. Milne, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000).
- 27 Thus, apart from English, India has as many as twenty-three officially recognized national languages, of which Hindi is the largest. In Nigeria, the only official language is English. Nevertheless, there are several hundreds of actively used and officially recognized languages, of which the largest one (Hausa) is supplementary to English (mainly in the northern parts of the federation).
- 28 Switzerland, which was mentioned earlier, is a specific case where, already in pre-modern times (in the 13th century), a number of ethnic groups with different languages voluntarily united and established a form of confederacy (the Swiss Confederation). The three most important languages – German, French, and Italian – are used as parallel *lingua franca* on the federal level.
- 29 For an excellent overview and conceptual classification of the world’s various types of politically and constitutionally deviant regions, see G. Marks, L. Hooghe, S. Chapman, A.H. Schakel, S. Niedzwiecki and S. Shair-Rosenfield, (2014). *From uniform to differentiated governance*. APSA 2014 Annual Meeting Paper.
- 30 Also in cases where the language of the region does not deviate from the metropolitan state (e.g. Madeira and Azores/Portugal and Gibraltar and Isle of Man/UK), various forms of regional home-rule exist. As a rule, there are no significant secessionist movements in these regions. Nevertheless, in some cases a deviant historical background and other types of identity conflicts might initiate political disagreements and secessionist movements, of which Scotland (the UK) is an example.
- 31 Obviously, this does not apply to federations where historical and territorial language minorities do not exist or are so small that they lack political weight (e.g. Germany and Austria). These types of political dynamics are also absent in autonomies with the same linguistic and cultural background as the metropolitan state’s population (e.g. Madeira, the Canary Islands, Gibraltar).
- 32 This is especially true for the two Central European federations (Germany and Austria), where there are no regional language minorities of political importance. An exception is previously mentioned Switzerland. In a class of its own in EU-Europe is Belgium with a rather odd (semi-) federal construction including regions with legislative authorities and (non-territorial) “language communities” differing with regard to language as well as autonomy, see Berhoumi (2016) and B. Maddens, “Flanders” in Turp and Sanjaume-Calvet (2016). A more peripheral European/Asian exception is the Russian federation with its difficulties in regions and federal states by the border to the Caucasus area in the south where deviant languages, cultures, and religions exist.
- 33 The autonomous region’s population composition is also of some importance. In autonomies with significant groups of immigrated representatives of the host state’s majority population, the separatist tendencies are usually – but not always (cf. Catalonia) – weaker.
- 34 What is perceived as too little room for maneuver, however, varies considerably between different autonomies depending on their background history and political traditions.
- 35 For a description and an analysis of the development of South Tyrol, see R. Steininger, *South Tyrol: A Minority Conflict of the Twentieth Century*, (New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers 2003); S. Constantin, “South Tyrol” in D. Turp and Sanjaume-Calvet (2016); S.J. Larin and M. Röggl, “South Tyrol’s Autonomy Convention is not a breakthrough for participatory democracy – but it shows how power-sharing can transform conflicts”, *Nationalia*, Dec. (2017).
- 36 For an analysis of the political development in Catalonia and the background of the escalating political conflict with the Spanish state, see M. Sanjaume-Calvet, “Catalonia” in Turp and Sanjaume-Calvet (2016); J. Tamames, “The Roots of Spanish Rage”, *Jacobin Magazine*, November 18, 2017.
- 37 For an analysis of the language issue as an important part of the conflict today, see W. G. Dug, “How Spain uses courts to turn its lies about Catalonia into truth”, *The National*, November 18, 2017.
- 38 See for example M. Parish, “Catalonia Votes – Analysis”, *Eurasia Review*, November 28, 2017; R. Youngs, “EU needs a smarter response to the Catalonia crisis” *Politico*, November 6, 2017.
- 39 J. Barros, *The Åland Island Question: Its Settlement by the League of Nations*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).
- 40 For an analysis of the focus of Åland’s autonomy model on the Swedish language of the population, see B. Lindström, “Culture and Economic Development in Åland”, in *Lessons from the Political Economy of Small Islands. The Resourcefulness of Jurisdiction*, eds., G. Baldacchino and D. Milne, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000); B. Lindström, ”Beskattningen och den åländska självstyrelsens finansiering. Dagsläge och historisk bakgrund” [Taxation and the funding of the Åland autonomy. Present and past outline], *YMER* 2015, Årg. 135 (2014), 137–149.
- 41 See Ålands Lagting, *Yttrande från självstyrelsepolitiska nämnden*, No. 1, La/2014–2015.
- 42 For a more detailed description and analysis of the development and the political room for maneuver of the two Danish autonomies, see A. Karlsson, and B. Lindström, *Sub-National Insular Jurisdictions as Configurations of Jurisdictional Powers and Economic Capacity. A Study of Åland, The Faroe Islands and Greenland*, (Stockholm: Nordregio, 2006); A. Grydehøj, “Greenland”, in Turp and Sanjaume-Calvet (2016); S. Skaale, “The Faroe Islands” in Turp and Sanjaume-Calvet (2016).
- 43 An illustrative example of the “hedgehog policy” in relation to the language of the majority population that this type of restrictive autonomy

- tends to generate is the Åland Islands with regard to Finland and the Finnish language, see B. Lindström. "Åland's Autonomy – A Compromise Made in Finland" in *Socio-Economic Developments in Greenland and in other Small Nordic Jurisdictions*, ed., L. Lyck, (Copenhagen: New Social Science Monographs, 1997).
- 44 However, note that of all the sovereign states in the world, ten have no more than 50,000 inhabitants and about twenty have fewer than 110,000 inhabitants. One geographic element related to small size is the fact that several of the autonomies in the world are insular communities, that is, islands. See T. Bahcheli, B. Bartmann and H. Srebrnik, *De Facto States. The quest for sovereignty*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2004).
- 45 A number of examples of this type of intricate balance between the (relative) size and the political conditions of the autonomous region, not only in Europe but globally as well, are presented and analyzed in G. Baldacchino and D. Milne, *The Case for Non-Sovereignty. Lessons from sub-national island jurisdictions*. (New York: Routledge, 2009); E. Hepburn, and G. Baldacchino, *Independence Movements in Subnational Island Jurisdictions*, (New York: Routledge, 2013).
- 46 However, the former colonial power France is an exception. Their Jacobin and Napoleonic traditions focusing on centralism and territorial standardization do not allow for regional deviants. In accordance with the constitution, the state territory is indivisible and the only official language is French. Still, interestingly enough, France has granted its non-European group of islands New Caledonia a certain autonomy (*lois de pays*) – but the same political status is denied the geographically closer Corsica.
- 47 See, for example, M.M. Riqué, "Spanien: Kastilianskt imperium eller nationalstat i vardande?" [Spain: Catalonic Imperium or a Nation-State in Be-coming?] in *Europa – Historiens återkomst* [Europe the Return of the History] ed., S. Tägil, (Hedemora: Gidlunds Bokförlag, 1992).
- 48 For a more detailed analysis of the differences between the Danish and the Finnish attitudes towards their respective autonomies due to the different historical and geopolitical conditions of these two states, see M. Ackrén and B. Lindström, "Autonomy development, irredentism and secessionism in a Nordic context", *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 50:4 (2012), 494–511.
- 49 B. Lindström and E. Naucér, "Åland", in *Solution protocols to festering island disputes*, ed. G., Baldacchino, (London & New York: Routledge, 2017).
- 50 According to a number of independent experts, several of the British island autonomies qualify for the group of international "tax paradises" named by the EU. However, so far the United Kingdom has prevented their inclusion in the group. See J. Garside, "Is the EU tax haven blacklist a whitewash?" *The Guardian*, December 5, 2017.
- 51 See K.L. Johannesen, *The Faroes in a globalized world – opportunities and challenges*. Lecture held by Johannesen at the University of Iceland, October 16, 2009; B. Jákupsstovu and R. Berg, "The Faroe Islands' Security Policy in a Process of Devolution", *Stjórnsmál & Stjórnálysla*, 8:2 (2012): 413–430.
- 52 For an analysis of the relationship between these two internationally recognized principles of law, see for example D. Turp, "Conclusion: The emergence of democratic right of self-determination in Europe and the world", in Turp and Sanjaume-Calvet (2016); Levrat et al. (2017); A. Hehir, "Self-determination is legal under international law – it's hypocritical to argue otherwise for Catalonia", *The Conversation*, October 30, 2017.
- 53 Excluding ten parties that have associated or observatory status. The EFA is officially recognized by the European Commission and represented in the European Parliament. Its overriding political objective is to promote the right to self-determination of all European peoples. The EFA is active in seventeen EU states, and their parliamentarians represent the whole extent of the political scale from left to right, including "green" parties.
- 54 Unsurprisingly, the Corsican election outcome was not well received in Paris. The first official comments of the French Minister of the Interior (Jacqueline Gourault) expressed that this is not the right time for Corsica to demand legislative power and that there will be no question of granting the Corsican language official status because the only official language of France is French. Thus, in practice, the French government has – at least so far – blocked the road towards a more developed autonomy, which resulted in counterdemonstrations in Ajaccio, the capital of Corsica, in February 2018. See further Nationalia, *Corsican nationalist win absolute majority, call on French government to negotiate autonomy*. Online news about stateless nations and peoples, January 23, 2018.
- 55 J. Münchrath and A. Rezmer, "Mini-Trumps are coming up all over Europe", *Handelsblatt Global*, December 29, 2017. This is significant in the ever-deeper conflict between Spain and Catalonia. The relationship between London and Scotland is also affected. The right-wing oriented and populist resistance against regional deviants is apparent also in other places, for example, in the relationship between the Åland Islands and Finland.
- 56 In the German context named *Landesblindheit*. S. Panara and A. Becker, "The Role of the Regions in the European Union: The "Regional Blindness" of Both the EU and the Member States", in *The Role of the Regions in EU Governanc*, eds., S. Panara and A. Becker, (Berlin & Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2011).
- 57 The principle of subsidiarity as well as the European Committee of the Regions are formally included in the Treaty on European Union (the so called Maastricht Treaty), which entered into force in 1993.
- 58 G. Dauwen, *On Autonomy and Independence in Europe*, EFA-intervention for Seminar in Mariehamn, October 22, 2014.
- 59 Panara & Becker (2011). The imbalance becomes even more marked if the autonomous region of the concerned member state is refused representation in the European Parliament, which is true for the Åland Islands and Finland.
- 60 The dominance of the member states at the EU level is also evident regarding the other two cornerstones of the exercise of power of the modern state, namely the control of the dominant internal communication standard (the language) and the internal economy. The official languages of the Union do not include languages that are not recognized as "national languages" by some of the member states. Maltese, which is spoken only by 0.3 million people, is an official EU language, whereas Catalan spoken by more than 7 million EU citizens is not. The most important parts of the member states' control of their "national economies" (e.g. taxation) are also almost completely outside the competence of the Union.
- 61 The restrictions of Spain on the democratic freedoms and human rights as well as the "use of excessive force" in order to stop the Catalan independence movement have been criticized (among many other independent assessors) by Amnesty International, *The state of the world's human rights Annual Report 2017/18*. (London: Peter Benson House, 2018).
- 62 This argument is further discussed in B. Lindström, *The Need for a Fundamentally Reformed EU* (2016). Available at: <http://www.spatialforesight.eu/imagine-europe.html>.
- 63 See for example "An ever-deeper democratic deficit" in *The Economist*, May 26th, 2012.