

## **Possible future states of Europe: Gateways or getaway states**

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**Abstract:** The number of sovereign states has more than quadrupled since 1939. Meanwhile, there are about 50 small political units in the World in some form of dependency, and for that reason, possible candidates for new and small, independent states. Most of these units are not located in geopolitically sensitive areas, so their independence would not destabilise the geopolitical balance of their regions. Parallel to the proliferation of new states are processes of integration, mainly economic, and mainly in Europe. These processes have evolved parallel with the tendencies towards independence in some European Union (EU) member states, whose high democratic standards have been tested as calls for independence have become more vociferous, even resulting in separatist movements and rebellions. This paper examines the prospects of calls for independence within the EU, with Catalonia and Scotland as the most prominent examples, serving as tests for democratic institutions of both the EU and its member states.

**Keywords:** Catalonia. European Union, gateway states, independence, interdependence, nation states, referendum, Scotland, Yugoslavia

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## **Introduction**

The 1970s and 1980s suggested that the issue of new states was primarily one situated in the post-World War I era (Raic, 2009). This involved the dismantling of multinational empires, often deemed despotic, which came in step with processes of decolonisation. As evidenced by the Ethiopia-Eritrea and Russia-Georgia wars in the last two decades, along with grave tension between neighbours such as Kosovo and Serbia or Sudan and South Sudan or Russia and Ukraine, war between the rump territory and a seceding entity remains a distinct possibility. Additionally, losing substantial territory and population at a stroke considerably weakens a state relative to existing state rivals, who can act opportunistically against the weakened state (Butt, 2017, p. 7).

Van der Pijl's (2014) thesis about separation and fragmentation as a way to make things easier for the hegemon is also worth noting. Van der Pijl puts secessions in the context of support for them, mostly from the hegemonic power (the USA) at the fringes of the former Soviet Union or the fringes of today's Russia, as well as in the Balkans. The breakups of the

Soviet Union and Yugoslavia produced a much larger number of weaker states. Nevertheless, many ethnic groups were left in two or more newly independent states; and smaller nations, which did not have their own republics in the multinational communist federations, did not gain statehood. So far, Kosovo is the only widely (but not fully) recognized state in the Balkans that has not been a republic of a former communist federation (Yugoslavia), thereby setting a legal precedent in that sense.

### **Secession attempts in the EU: Differences and paradoxes**

There are no direct secessionist conflicts amongst states in the EU. Attempts to secede do exist, but have so far been contained. The case of Spain and Catalonia is very difficult to compare with the case of the UK and Scotland; no violence occurred before and after the Scottish independence referendum, although tensions have been on the rise after the June 2016 Brexit vote. The Scottish ruling party has been considering a second referendum for independence, wanting to keep Scotland in the EU. However, the signs from Westminster are not promising.

Nevertheless, separatism is a spectre that is haunting Europe. Scotland, Catalonia, Flanders and South Tyrol have separatist movements pursuing independence from their current nation state. The breakup of an EU member state no longer seems impossible (Martini and Damm, 2014, p. 159). If all these separatists were successful, the EU would be faced with a couple of new, rather small states that would most likely aspire to become EU member states. However, a successful secession would not mean that a state that was a product of secession would automatically continue to be a part of the EU. This is one of the strongest factors that tame the intensity of separatist aspirations among the populations of the afore-mentioned territories.

The total dissolution of a state is rather unlikely in the EU. But there is a lesson to be learned from the Czechoslovak ‘velvet divorce’: both the Czech and Slovak sides seemed to have accepted the customary rule expressed in Article 34 of the Vienna Convention on Succession of States in Respect of Treaties (VCSST) - *ipso facto* succession into the dissolved state’s treaties. Despite both being new states, they were also seen as equal successor states (Martini and Damm, 2014, p. 163).

The case of Catalonia contains immeasurably more tension and historical grievance, as well as prospects for a militarisation strategy adopted by the central state. Policing is ongoing, and the central government has made strong efforts, and even used violence, to thwart the independence referendum vote from happening. Separatist leaders have been accused of rebellion, sedition and embezzlement (Berwick, 2018) and have been accordingly sought out and jailed. The Spanish Constitution does not offer a realistic possibility for any province to ever become independent; hence, voters from the whole country would need to support the independence i.e. secession of one part of that country.

Political and territorial tensions in Spain were running high both before and after the Scottish referendum (Castello, León-Solís & O’Donnell, 2016, p. 159). This referendum was perceived as the “rehearsal” for the Catalan independence referendum. The first non-binding “self-determination poll” (as an alternative to the referendum that was banned by the Spanish Constitutional Court) also known as the Citizen Participation Process on the Political Future of Catalonia, was held on November 9, 2014. About 2.3 million (out of a total of 5.4 million) voters participated, and through two referendum questions (Do you want Catalonia to become a State? (Yes/No); If so: b) Do you want this state to be independent? (Yes/No), about 80% supported Catalonia becoming an independent state. About ten percent supported Catalonia

becoming a state, but not an independent one; whilst circa 4.5 percent did not support any of the proposed changes, preferring the status quo.

The second, binding referendum was also banned by the Spanish Constitutional Court, deemed illegal and suppressed by force (Time Magazine, 2017). About 2.3 million votes were cast (similar as in 2014) of which 92% were for the independence of Catalonia. The opponents of independence mostly boycotted the referendum, which was suppressed by preventive actions (seizing of the ballots), and actions on the day of the referendum by the federal authorities. Thus, up to about 770 000 votes were not cast, according to Catalan authorities, due to these disruptive actions of the federal authorities in Catalonia. However, the support for the independence of Catalonia is not as nearly as high as the results of the contested 2017 referendum would suggest, and that was visible in the results of early elections, held after the federal authorities dissolved the Catalan Parliament.

The results were as follows: the three separatist parties won a total of 70 seats in the 135-seat regional parliament, even though the centre-right, pro-unionist Citizens Party was the single biggest winner, taking 36 seats. Together for Catalonia – the party led by deposed Catalan president, Carles Puigdemont – took 34 seats (21.7 percent of the popular vote); the Catalan Republican Left (ERC) took 32 seats (21.4 percent); and the far-left, anti-capitalist Popular Unity took four seats (4.5 percent) (*The Guardian*, December 22, 2017). With 47.6% of the total popular vote, these three parties did not win a majority. From these results, it is clear that the pro-independence majority is very slim.

Secessionism, threatened or activated, casts a shadow on some Western and Southern European states. Nevertheless, these secession issues are not nearly as troubling and dangerous to international peace as the frozen or not so frozen conflicts of the Western Balkans and the post-Soviet space (Caucasus and, more recently, Ukraine). As Solov'ev (2009, p. 11) has recognized,

Within the European Union, the problems of Trieste, southern Tyrol, the principality of Seborga, Corsica, the Basque country, Scotland, Flanders, Brittany, Wales, and Catalonia can still be muffled by official rhetoric. In the Balkans and the post-Soviet space, interethnic conflicts are out in the open.

This highlights various, what might be called taxonomies of separatism; the “old” separatisms in some of the EU-15 countries contrasted with the “new”, ongoing conflict situations in the Post-Yugoslav and Post-Soviet Space, with the strong role of geopolitics, regional and great powers in the latter. The “new” separatism in Europe and Wider Europe is mainly connected with the dissolution of multinational communist federations, Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, whilst the “old” separatism can be found in some of the EU-15 countries. Both forms of separatism can be violent, and the “new” separatism usually was/is. The “old” separatisms were in several cases successfully contained without any (Scotland, South Tyrol) or any serious (Catalonia) violence due to the high democratic standards and the role of the EU and the Council of Europe. Nevertheless, there are more or less violent opposite examples (Basque, Corsica). One of the main differences between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ separatisms in Europe is that the ‘old’ separatisms do not threaten the wider regional stability and European geopolitical relations; whilst the ‘new’ separatisms, especially on the borders of Russia and in wider Europe, as well as in the Western Balkans, do: consider Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, North Ossetia and Abkhazia, as well as in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Despite the adoption of federalism as a model in certain states, the issue hardly cures the issue of ethnic tensions. Diversity has not necessarily managed to justify claims of internal stability. Stepan (1999, p. 20) writes cogently on this point:

The six longstanding democracies that score the highest on the index of linguistic and ethnic diversity – India, Canada, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States – are all federal states. The fact that these nations chose to adopt a federal system does not prove anything; it does suggest, however, that federalism may help these countries manage the problems that come with ethnic and linguistic diversity.

While all these states can be seen as successful compared to most diverse and multi-ethnic states, the case of Catalonia shows that, even in democracies and in the EU, calls for secession can be suppressed by force and legal instruments which do not offer any real possibility for a province to secede.

### **Secessionist conflicts and getaway states**

Secessionism is at the heart of most of the world's conflicts, often initially dormant matters arising from embedded, systemic instabilities and historic grievance. In the last seven decades, there have been about twice as many nationalist civil wars (95) as interstate wars of any kind (46) (Gleditsch, Wallenstein, Eriksson, Sollenberg & Strand, 2002) leading to the conclusion that such wars are the “chief source of violence in the world today” (Walter, 2009, p. 1). Between 1946 and 2005, the world saw, on average, over twenty-five such conflicts in any given year (Butt, 2017, p. 3).

It is clear that the likelihood of war increases dramatically if border changes are deemed unacceptable (Butt, 2017, p. 40), as occurs in most cases of separatism. Depending on the level of third-party (external) support that a separatist group enjoys, there are three likely scenarios that may occur: policing, militarisation and collective repression.

Secessionist conflicts can also have a considerable ethnic dimension, a tendency which tends to occur in less developed states. Osborne (2010) uses empirical analysis in discussing economic causes, aspects and implications of ethnic conflict. Rupprecht (2014) compares the cases of Pattani province separatism in Thailand and the Moro secessionist movement in the Philippine island of Mindanao.

Nation states are usually recent agglomerations of previously distinct political entities, often deriving from broader political units. The manner in which such combinations arise provides the grounds of contest. Within this matrix of considerations arise other interests that make territorial claims more salient. Hence, in many situations, natural resources will be located in regions where some political groups – albeit often on the fringe – are already claiming autonomy (Collier, 2006, p. 3).

Nevertheless, that does not mean that intergroup rivalry vanishes with the creation of a new state: political scientists have shown that the salience of particular ethnic and political cleavages changes with the redrawing of institutional and geographical boundaries (Laitin, 1985; Posner, 2005); but the particular ethnic group as a whole is no longer in danger of being unfairly targeted with respect to economic gains and losses (Butt, 2017, pp. 22-23).

Conflicts tied with the secession of certain areas abundant with natural resources (including proven oil reserves) from the countries that they belong to are causing a specific type of secessionist conflict. When the abundance of natural resources in some area overlaps with a certain degree of uniqueness (ethnic, religious, historical) that creates a separate identity

of the inhabitants of this area, demands for secession (or at least autonomy) are usually the rule, not the exception (Kurecic, Hunjet & Kozina, 2015, p. 75). The situation could exacerbate a mix of greed and grievance, increasing the likelihood of civil war, a coup or even a foreign military intervention through growing nationalism, allegations of corruption, or the desire to capture a (greater) share of larger revenues (Le Billon, 2009, p. 839).

In northeast Africa, the cases of Eritrea and Somaliland are examples of nationalist rather than ethnic or religious narratives that led to separation. In both cases, early post-independence disputes over state allocated resources contributed to violent conflicts, partly with the former state and internal.

Elsewhere in Africa, politically credible secessionist movements in Angola (Cabinda), Democratic Republic of Congo (Katanga), Nigeria (Biafra), and Senegal (Casamance), have occurred at the intersection of economic incentive (mineral wealth or agricultural resources) and ethnic or regional identity. It is rare to find a resource poor province seeking to secede from a richer mother country (de Waal, 2014, p. 42).

In a study confined to African civil wars, Buhaug and Rød (2006) differentiated between: (1) territorial conflict that is more likely in sparsely populated regions near the state border, at a distance from the capital, and without significant rough terrain; and (2) conflict over state governance that is more likely to occur in densely populated regions near diamond fields and close to the capital. The secessionist conflicts are clearly type 1 conflicts, since they are usually fought in the regions near state borders, which make up the state's periphery and have certain uniqueness: geographical, historical, ethnic, cultural.

### **The paradox of former socialist Yugoslavia and its breakup**

Since 1974, former Yugoslavia was a federation, and the Constitution proclaimed by Tito and the communist government allowed “self-determination until secession”, a process of devolution that was seen as “paralleling the devolution of power within the party from the central organs of the leaderships of the republican and provincial organizations” (Burg, 1982, p. 131). The genesis of this lay in the 1971 amendments that were the product of drafting by regional representatives within the compact (Secretariat of Information of the Federal Executive Council, 1971), though that development was arguably part of the evolving nature of the federation’s constitution and perennial nationalist tensions (Schoup, 1968; Hondius, 1968). The resulting constitution was meant to lessen potential problems arising with the death of Tito (Roberts, 1978) and how the succession question might be best negotiated. The document was the legal basis for referenda that took place in the republics that wanted to secede, but it was also the product of convergence between ethno-regional and economic differences underscored by a commitment to unity by the Communist Party and the Yugoslav “ideology of self-management” (Burg, 1982, p.131). In Slovenia, the referendum took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1990, just eight months after the first multi-party elections. Croatia, due to its significant Serbian minority, postponed the referendum until May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1991. Both countries proclaimed their independence on June 25, 1991. Croatia, again for the same reason, proclaimed a moratorium on the decision. Nevertheless, Croatia broke all political and legal ties with Yugoslavia (then already considered as a former state by the republics that proclaimed their independence) on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1991.

France sought to use its influence in the UN to contain the conflict (and German influence and rashness in a prompt recognition of Croatia’s secessionist claims), while Serbia turned to the US to resist German-led support for Slovenia's and Croatia's secession. Because of the appointment of former US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to the post of UN emissary

and the long-standing relations between the UN and Yugoslavia, the UN mission was welcomed as a sign of US commitment to Yugoslavia's federal unity (Woodward, 1995, p. 180). The unilateral recognition of Slovenia's and Croatia's secession by Germany in December 1991 marks the high-water mark of regional sphere-of-interest policies with respect to Yugoslavia (van der Pijl, 2001, p. 291). In this instance, there was clear third-party support for secession. On the other hand, there was support for keeping the Yugoslavian compact intact, most notably from the Soviet Union and, in the initial stages of the crisis, from the USA as well. As history shows, referenda, which were later held in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, did not bring about a peaceful dissolution of the former federation, given the seemingly irreconcilable differences between competing forms of ethno-nationalism. The breakup of Serbia proper and the subsequent secession of its province Kosovo is the only secession on the territory of former Yugoslavia which did not follow the 1974 Constitution, which provided the legal basis for the Badinter Commission to recommend the recognition of successor states of former Yugoslavia, with the inter-republic borders that became inter-state borders after 1991. Serbia and Montenegro maintained a unified state from 1992 until 2006, when Montenegro seceded. At this point, Serbia became an independent state: the only former Yugoslav state that did not want to be independent, but a cornerstone of larger South Slav states since the First World War. Additionally, since 1999, Serbia lacked effective control of Kosovo, which proclaimed its own independence in 2008, and is recognized by more than 100 countries. That said, the Kosovo case has been deemed a "tough" one, where "its status within international organisations and its succession to rights and obligations to Serbia remain open" (Borgen, 2008, n.d.). With the collapse of the mediation process between Kosovar Albanians and Serbia at the end of 2007 as overseen by the troika (the EU, Russia and the US), Serbia, Russia, Moldova, Romania Spain and Cyprus deemed that any recognition of Kosovar secession as a breach of international law (Borgen, 2008). Almost 11 years after it proclaimed independence, Kosovo is not recognized by five EU member states (Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain). Unsurprisingly, those states are also struggling with their own secession problems. In a statement from the Russian Duma (noted in Borgen, 2008), it was asserted that,

The right of nations to self-determination cannot justify recognition of Kosovo's independence along with the simultaneous refusal to discuss similar acts by self-proclaimed states, which have obtained *de facto* independence exclusively by themselves.

In the case of Yugoslavia, unlike that of Czechoslovakia, there was a parallel dissolution and secession, followed by heated and violent conflict, primarily centred over the issue of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), formed of Serbia and Montenegro, wanted to be the dominant successor state, while the other former Yugoslav republics claimed that Yugoslavia had dissolved, and wanted secession to follow, which in the end prevailed. Historical grievances were re-ignited by irredentist tendencies in a region rife with historical competition over territory and acquisitions (Vovchenko, 2016).

The paradox of the breakup of former Yugoslavia lies in the fact that the federal government, due to its divisions and ineffectiveness, did not try to prevent the independence referenda in the republics. The referenda were held in accordance with the 1974 Constitution; Slovenia and Croatia were subsequently recognized by the international community in 1992, with Germany as the forerunner among the large European states and only after war in Slovenia had occurred and was ongoing in Croatia, with countries like the United States and the United Kingdom being initially reluctant. In contrast, the independence referendum held in Bosnia-Herzegovina on February 29<sup>th</sup>, 1992 was actually a prelude to a full-scale war that started six weeks after.

### **Ethno-federalism in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union**

Discussing the breakups of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, as states that were based on ethno-federalism, Grigoryan (2012, p. 521) refers to how ethno-federal systems do not decrease the probability of conflict by addressing the mobilised groups' grievances and fears, but actually increases that probability,

Institutions of autonomy improve the minorities' mobilisational capacity also by bestowing a certain legitimacy on the demands made through those institutions, which makes resistance against such demands much more complicated for the state.

Bunce (1998, p. 35) argues,

The federal design in the USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia gave a distinctly national and spatial content to the process of bargaining over power and privileges within these federations ... The very process of deciding who gets what in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia politicised national–territorial divisions, while giving them economic content in the process.

Using data drawn from post-1945 using a 'same-system' comparative design, Anderson (2015) suggests that ethnofederal systems have generally failed where no institutional alternatives could have succeeded. When ethno-federalism has worked, this has occurred when other institutional forms have failed.

Grigoryan (2012) argues that ethno-federalism, which in the end led to the 1974 Constitution, was something that Yugoslav communists tried to suppress at the beginning eventually seeing it as a necessary evil. The document's origins lie in a set of pressures within the compact to maintain political stability, initiated by different nationalities, especially the Croats and Slovenes, to push for regional representation. This measure invariably saw other groups treated differently: the Serbs and Albanians, for instance, were spread out in more than two republics; and Albanians did not have their own republic, which would then become a state at the time of the breakup of Yugoslavia. The approach, however, is consistent if viewed from the standpoint of socialist development: the need to adjust to developments posed by social change and crisis, requiring constitutional rewrites and amendments (Roberts, 1978, p. 137).

Other failed attempts at the practice of ethno-federalism are found in the Caucasus: they include Armenia/Azerbaijan (Nagorno Karabakh), Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) and Russia (Chechnya). Here, the military power of the state comprising a certain unit based on ethnic principles (namely, the entity that wants to secede or has seceded) is the decisive factor that determines whether the state controls its territory or not. Transnistria is another example of failed ethno-federalism, with failed attempts by Moldova to reintegrate the 'oblast'.

In an article written before the Russo-Georgian War of August 2008, Solov'ev (2009, p. 10) claims that precedents were set with the cases of Kosovo and Montenegro, opening possibilities for others to follow,

...events within the post-Soviet space will be influenced in the most direct way by the precedents of Montenegro and Kosovo. In any event, the unrecognized republics – Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia – now have the right to request that the world community recognize their independence.

Crimea is an example where a territory with an ethnic majority that comprised a majority in the biggest federal unit (Russian SFSR) was adjoined to another federal unit (Ukrainian SFSR). This created a situation which, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, left a Russian majority in Crimea and eastern parts of Ukraine outside its newly formed “motherland” state, as in most of the former Soviet republics. This situation, combined with the strategic importance of the Crimea peninsula, has led to Russian annexation of the peninsula, with Ukraine losing control of Crimea and effective administrative control over parts of the eastern regions of the state currently in conflict.

Problematising pushes for sovereignty in post-Soviet republics, Gorenburg (1999, p. 245) states,

Many scholars and politicians believe that the sovereignty drive among former autonomous republics in Russia was orchestrated primarily to preserve the communist-era local elite’s control over their regions and to increase their power vis-a-vis the central government.

Calls for sovereignty in the autonomous republics of Russia were driven mostly by local elites’ fear that they would lose autonomy to the central government, and not by feelings of ethnic distinctiveness (Raviot, 1992; Roeder, 1994; Solnick, 1995; Treisman, 1996). In his analysis of the post-Soviet situation in four autonomous republics (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Chuvashia and Khakassia), Gorenburg (1999, pp. 244-246) argues that,

[these elites] ... wanted to promote ethnic revival in order to ensure the cultural and political survival of their ethnic group. [However], they did not want to alienate Russian inhabitants from their region and the central government in Moscow.

On the other hand, Hagendoorn, Poppe & Minescu (2008) surveyed popular support for separatism among Russians and non-Russian titular nationalities (titulars) in 10 ethnic republics of the Russian Federation in 1999 and 2000: Karelia, Komi, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Udmurtia, Adygea, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Sakha-Yakutia and Tuva. 5,233 Russians and 4,703 titulars responded. Ethnic antagonism has plagued a number of regions of the Russian Federation (Codagnone, 1997). Stepanov (2000) reports that 35 out of the 89 federal subjects of the Russian Federation were ‘ethnically troubled’ in 2000 and all ethnic republics fell under this category. However, not all ethnic conflicts are between Russians and titulars. Three major areas of conflict are: the Caucasus, the Volga-Ural region and East Siberia (Hagendoorn et al., 2008, p. 355).

### **The prospects of new gateway states**

Cohen (1994, p. 38) had suggested that the world might comprise about 250 states by 2025. In this light, we are considering how realistic are the prospects for the formation of certain gateway states. Some of those were more likely to become gateway states (a concept that Cohen developed), whilst some would end up in secessionist conflicts with the state from which they are trying to secede. Cohen elaborated his theory in the early 1990s, when the world’s political map was undergoing rapid and important changes, especially in Eurasia, where a breakup of multinational communist federations changed the geopolitical context in the strategically most important parts of the World, at the contact of Heartland and Rimland. The concept comprises both *gateway states* (as territories with formal sovereignty) and *gateways*, as territories without a formal sovereignty. For example, Hong Kong, British Virgin Islands and many other territories well connected in trade and capital flows but without formal sovereignty, can be designated as gateways; whilst small Caribbean island states or, for



example, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Estonia, can be designated as gateway states. Gateway states are “politically and culturally distinct, have historical culture hearts, with separate languages, religions, or national churches, higher degrees of education, and favourable access by sea or land to external areas” and “optimally situated for specialised manufacturing, trade, tourism and financial service functions, thus stimulating global economic, social and political interaction” (Cohen, 1994, pp. 38, 39). Cohen (ibid.) also stresses that, economically, gateways tend to be more developed than the core areas of their host states because they are often endowed with strong entrepreneurial and trading traditions. Gateways are usually small in area and population; but they often have high population densities, and lie on vital trading routes on land and sea corridors. This situation assigns them high military and strategic value to their parent states.

Although formal sovereignty in everyday life may not mean a lot to most of the citizens of certain gateways, there are many attempts in gateways around the world, successful (rare) and unsuccessful, violent and non-violent to achieve formal sovereignty. The success and the character of attempts to gain statehood depend on geopolitical context (state, regional and supra-regional). Nevertheless, even in the most developed and non-conflictual regions of the world, such as Europe (excluding the Balkans and the eastern fringes of Europe) we witness revived attempts to gain formal sovereignty, such as Catalonia and Scotland, among others.

One can note two opposing trends in recent decades. The first is the improving prospects for new gateway states, mainly as a result of deterritorialisation and internationalisation, reducing the importance of and enabling a reconsideration of borders. This was aided, in no small part, by the rhetoric of globalisation, which, in its nature, insists on breaking down such borders in favour of free moving capital, finance, goods and labour.

However, protectionism has been revitalised and, along with that reterritorialisation, thereby reversing the trends of deterritorialisation. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and other attacks that followed have changed the perception of internationalisation and immigration. The secessionist tendencies within EU states have also to be seen in combination with the broader secessionist trends in the Euro bloc, a set of threatened delinking processes affecting the European project. With Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg being deemed incipient centres of a mega-European, supranational state unaccountable to EU member state citizens, the fraying of ties has begun. In the UK, ‘Brexit’ has inspired populist movements across Europe, while also triggering the prospect of an *internal* secessionism within states. The case of Scotland is particularly significant in this regard, with Scotland’s First Minister and Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) leader Nicola Sturgeon ever keen to push the line of Scottish independence. With the Brexit vote, a chance for pushing a second Scottish referendum on whether Scotland would leave the UK has presented itself. Admittedly, such enthusiasm was dampened by the 2017 UK general election, which saw the SNP lose seats to the Conservatives.

The coming to power of the Lega in Italy, with pronounced anti-Brussels tendencies; the initial position of Syriza in Greece towards the troika (European Central Bank, European Commission and IMF), and the emergence of such groups as the Visegrad countries (Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) keen to redefine refugee politics, all arguably point to broader separatist tendencies, citing the need to reclaim sovereignty from the supranational body. This unravelling of European unity has presented the prospect of state fragmentation as a genuine reality.

## Conclusion

Brexit, Trump, further tightening of state borders, as well as stricter border controls and border security, have reduced the prospects of new gateway states. Unsuccessful secession attempts are much more frequent than successful ones. At the same time, that might bring about more calls for separatism with formal sovereignty, abandoning good relations with the state from which the secession was successfully performed. Such actions would thereby create new “getaway states”, with what is deemed a safe haven by one side, but designated as a rogue province for the other. Therefore, the main difference between a gateway and ‘getaway state’ is their relation towards a larger (in many cases, former) state, from which a certain part of territory has detached at some point in history. Taiwan is an example of a getaway state from East Asia. Macau and Hong Kong are, on the contrary, examples of gateway states, which despite some tensions, maintain fruitful economic and trade relations with mainland China, to which they should be fully returned in 2047 and 2049, respectively. And, even then, it would be hardly surprising that China would not preserve a special economic status of Hong Kong and Macau, hence it benefits everybody. Cases like Kosovo, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria are examples of getaway states of Europe. The getaway states’ sovereignty is usually contested, thereby increasing the propensity towards armed conflict, often with various participating actors with vested interests. Nevertheless, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, opposite to general perception, the majority of states that have achieved their independence have managed to avoid armed conflict during that process.

Such developments do not invalidate Cohen’s concept; and 2025 is almost upon us anyway. However, after 25 years or so, it may need further development and critical revision.

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