

# Independence and globalization

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**Abstract:** The essay in an attempt to give answers to some research questions. The first one has connection with the link between the European Identity and the European Unity, as well as what does that involve at all levels of governance – national, local. The second group of questions has an aim to investigate the surrounding the relationship between independentists and nationalism, in particular we will consider the Galicia.

**Keywords:** European Unity, European Identity, national governance, local governance, Spanish region of Galicia.

## Introduction

The question of identities is a very new concept which is becoming more and more explored nowadays. There is a plurality of way to define someone’s identity, as the national identity, or the regional one, the gender, belonging to a particular social class... One of the most frequent question we ask to ourselves, within those new individualist societies, is “Who I am?”, “How can I describe myself?”.

Of course the answer will depend on the context. For example, if one new neighbor rings at our bell, we can be pretty sure he will not introduce himself as a citizen of Europe, but rather as a new inhabitant of the building. On another hand, if a Greek student goes in Bulgaria thanks to the Erasmus program, then, he will probably define himself as Greek. Therefore, can we conclude that who we are depends on which context we are? But can it also depends on who is asking and in which period of our life? Then, we can already guess that our identity(-ies) is something which is on perpetual evolution.

## Independence and globalization – theoretical base

To speak about identities in a large European context, we can try to figure out what is making us European people. What is actually making the European identity? According to a survey made by Renaud Soufflot de Magny [1], a politic analyst, European people tend to define themselves by their nation, and then, maybe, as a citizen of the world, but most of the time they skip this “European part” of their “geographical identity”. As a counter-example we can see that for people from the United States of America it’s absolutely the opposite: they think themselves as American, without making any distinction between “being a citizen of the American continent” and “being a citizen of the United States of America”, like if USA actually are the entire American continent.

Nowadays, in Europe in particular, we are witnessing the emergence of another type of identity, which is much more focus on the regional, local part of the country we are born in. In this case, we are talking about the fact that the values of the country do not represent, satisfy, make proud, certain people as much as their regional values did. This could be the beginning of an independentism feeling. We are now left to wonder: *in which way this feeling grow up in this global word context?*

As there are several independence claims around the world and especially in Europe, we can work on a barely unknown case, the Spanish region of Galicia. First of all, we can question the

link between the European Identity and the European Unity, and what does that involve at all levels of governance – national, local. Then, there could be some questions surrounding the relationship between independentism and nationalism, that we will consider through the Galician example. Finally, we can work on the power balance that can be involved between independence and globalization.

During the XIX<sup>o</sup> century in Europe, we can see the development of the Nations (almost the same which exist nowadays), in opposition of the old European empires. The beginning of the “states nations” is due to the deep wish to create a national identity within all the citizen of a territory can belong and defined themselves.

To understand the historical conditions in which appears the question of European identity, it's necessary to briefly talk about the history of the creation of Europe. The creation of Europe is linked with the end of the Second world war and the deep desire to create an “area of peace and stability”, thanks to a process of political and economic unification. Moreover, this project is based on the humanist philosophical and intellectual tradition. Indeed, the thinkers of *Les Lumières* already had in mind this idea of United States of Europe.

Europe has not been created in once, from a day to the next. Since 1992 and the treaty of Maastricht, it was only some economical alliances between few countries. The European Union as we know nowadays was set up by the treaty of Lisbon only in 2007.

The main purpose of EU was to unify countries after the second world war. Indeed, one of the aims is to organize those countries behind the same flag, to promote a unique European Identity, culture or history (at least the recent one), and to blur little by little the differences, to legitimate peace.

However, is the creation of European Union enough to bring out a unique European Identity? Or to appear unity? The recent events (Greek crisis, Brexit...) show us that the answer is “no”. So we can legitimately wonder what makes us European? Do we have a common identity and is it really necessary to use it as a proof of unity?

After the first World War, to be for Europe means to be against the national sovereignty, therefore, for the first time, European Identity can be seen through institutions, as a political and juridical identity. But Europe is a paradox itself: according to Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, “*to describe Europe as a unique civilization is impossible*”. [2].

Indeed, it had been considered as such for the rest of the world during a long time because of its status of “old continent”, but on the other hand in Europe “*diversity and contradiction is more pregnant than in any other places in the world*” (Patrice Rolland in *L'unité Européenne*). [3].

We can say that geography constitutes the physical element of the European identity, even if the eastern limits are not very well defined already.

From a certain point of view, we can say that our identity is something that we can't choose, a part of our heritage. For example, we didn't choose the country in which we were born in. Nevertheless, to decide to be European, to belong to the European and to make Europe a part of our personal and collective identity is a matter of choice. In this case, our collective identity could also be relevant for European unity.

### **Independentism and nationalism – case study**

In a matter of good understanding, it's important to clearly define the notions of independentism and nationalism, in the context of this study. It's important to establish a clear border between what we usually called “nationalism”, as a policy whose purpose is mainly unity and prosperity of a nation and its people, and “independentism”, which is more the desire of a community to don't be submit to a majority. However, some independentists can also be nationalists, if their political claim's goal is to become a nation.

If we take the example of the Spanish region of Galicia to illustrate this speech, we can say that one of the main cultural things that draw a distinction between Galicia and the rest of Spain is the language. An entire literary movement grew up around this particular language and that is also what became a solid anchor for the fight for the independence in Galicia. Indeed, the firsts politic independentist people of this region were the intellectual ones, the writers, poets, artists, etc. One of the most famous of them was and still is Alfonso Daniel Rodríguez Castelao (1886 – 1950), who was a writer, painter, and political figure of independence in Galicia. [4].

Usually, an identity is defined in opposition to something or someone else. For example, it happens that we don't know who we are but we know precisely who we are not, compared to the others. This is the case for Galicia. People of this region are Galician because they are not Spanish, because they feel different, comparing to Spanish people. Their unity comes from this difference with something else.

The Galician identity has been built on the affirmation of this difference. According to Caroline Domingues, professor in Contemporary History of Spain, “*the Galician identity claim appears during the 19<sup>th</sup> century to challenge a relationship of domination*” [5].

From this moment, Galician has been more liked with the European and Portuguese identity, rather than the Spanish one. Nevertheless, far from being in a dynamic of extension, this region was content, during a long time, to only keep on going in a traditional way of life. About this kind of perseverance, Castelao wrote “life of Galicia has been more internal than external (...) it has not allowed itself to be conquered or dominated (...) it has not been conquering or dominating. His particular feature is that of resistance.” [6]

Here we can see that the purpose in Galicia has never been to extend or promote their culture or the language, but only to make it continuing and prospering.

According to interviews of two young Galician men (24 and 26 years old), the independence of Galicia as an actual country is not the purpose, “independence fight is more like a tool to fight against the Spanish imperialism in Galicia” [7].

In fact, the real purpose of those demands is what they call “auto-determination”, which means to get a horizontal power of political and juridical decisions, instead of the supremacy of Spain on the local regional power. Galician people and region has been mistreated during several centuries, and forced to interiorize their culture, language and way of life. People was seen as poor, stupid, useless farmers (we can feel that it's still the case nowadays, for example “Gallegos”, citizens of Galicia, was the definition of “idiots” in the Spanish dictionary since three years ago. This term is still used today in Spain and in America Latina.)

Then, generations of intellectuals tried to revalorize the Galician language and values, in a goal of building a new regional identity, removing this historical shame of being Galician.

Nowadays, independentism is related with daily life in Galicia. For example, it is most of the time related with cultural events, such as literature, songs, dances, carnival, festivals, music concerts... Galicia is the region in the world which has the most festival events during summer, and some of those are famous all around Europe and even the world. Moreover, 90% of them are politically engaged and related with the fight for independence.

Therefore, we can say that the Galician identity has been built in opposition of the Spanish identity, but also against the oppressive history of this region and the denigration of its culture. In echo to this idea, Caroline Domingues wrote “the identity claim makes it possible to open up to a chosen world allowing the affirmation of a universalism, specific to a community” [7].

The feeling of belonging to something specific is a new challenge in this new moving world, leaded by a politic and an economy directly linked with the globalization.

Indeed, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many sociologists mention a crisis of the identity, due to a difficulty for people to define themselves by the national identity. Beforehand, the question of identity was oriented by the nation, the social class or the gender, which was obvious and fixed. But nowadays it seems doesn't be enough anymore. That thought had been shared later in 1983 by the English-American Doctor Benedict Anderson, who noticed that the national identity is an "imagined community", which means that it's not as meaningful as it could have been. [8]

In fact, our modern identity is not fixed once for all anymore because it emanates from many different things. For example, it emerges from a huge conscience of some traditions, values, and beliefs from different countries than the mother one, that could inspire the individual behavior. If we follow the example of Galicia, we already said that they identify themselves closer to the Portuguese people than the Spanish one.

According to Stuart Hall (1932 – 2014) [9], this identity search emanates also from the conscience of our mixed roots that don't matched with one and a unique nation. And, most of all, we can say that it's more difficult to answer to the question of identity nowadays because in this global world, old traditions, customs, social behave and way of communicate are more and more questioned and hustled.

So, we can legitimately wonder in which way is it possible to be a supporter of independentism in this global world context. Zygmunt Bauman is a sociologist from Poland, who developed a theory about our modern identity through the globalization. He called it "the liquid modernity". According to him our identity changed from solid (based on balance, institutional structure, certainty, predictability) to liquid (based on movement, hazard, indetermination, unpredictability) [10].

In a sense, the nationalism or regionalism feeling grows up in reaction of this new way of life. To take back the example of the language (or the dialect), it is also a way to keep the feeling to belong to something fixed, certain and timeless; with the development of printing, the publishers enlarge their audience by publishing into vernacular languages. That sits more solidly those dialects and contributes to define human groups by their languages, and this "unification by the tong" propagates commune ideas and values, consolidating the feeling of being part of a nation or a region. Moreover, with the declaim of the religious importance, being "nationalist" or "regionalist" becomes for the people an object of favor, a worthy cause. (Benedict Anderson, 1983) [11].

It could sometimes be tempting to see globalization as the cause of all the social problems a society could face, or as the danger of modernity. But, globalization is before all a process. It means that globalization is not a "thing" which suddenly appears and destroys all the local/regional/ national specificities. It is a process which works step by step "through modernity", and each society appropriates on its own way the different elements of modernity, of this process. (Benedict Anderson, 1983) [12].

According to Alfonso Daniel Rodriguez Castelao [13] and the interviews made for this research, we can say that in the case of Galicia, this deep desire of independence can be seen as a direct consequence of the globalization world context. Indeed, it makes people being more likely to consume local products instead of exported ones, or to go shopping in little shops from their home towns instead of going in an international store. All those little daily actions take sense only in this global world context, in which you can today eat Indian or Chinese food almost everywhere in the world, or buying products that grew up in the other side of the world.

Moreover, we known that globalization in also related to an economical process which allows fast and easy transactions of money through the world. That also explains why communism and independence are linked in Galicia. Even if nowadays the real communist wing is not so relevant in Galicia, during the all history of this region, "regionalism" was related with the left wing (there is also some kind of right wing nationalism but it is insignificant). Therefore, the

link between nationalism and socialism in almost obvious: everything is about protecting the historical identity, the rights of being different, protecting the culture and the language... Finally, Europe (and at a different scale, the world) tends to globalized politic as well. We are trying to get a commune policy, laws, rights and so on and so forth, and this at different levels. But the fact is that Galicia in a region which is not so well represented as the level of the country, and even less at the level of Europe, this also explains why they developed this independentist pressure of the Spanish government; to actually having more decisional power inside the region about how those people really want to live in Galicia.

## Conclusion

As a conclusion, we can say that identity must be conquered at different scales: national level because of the governmental and economic pressure of the regions, at the scale of the world because of the globalization, at the scale of Europe because of the political and cultural and economic unification due to European Union, but also at the regional scale.

Indeed, as we already mentioned, people from this particular region can sometimes be ashamed of themselves, because of the bad image that the other part of the country reflects of them. For example, they can feel embarrassed to be farmers or to don't speak Spanish as well as Galician. But this is still part of the collective identity, and as we know the lowest level of self-construction is the individual identity. In a sense it could be the hardest one as well, because to clearly define ourselves it is necessary to succeed in asserting ourselves as not being the other, to find oneself within this very difference with "the other".

Thereby, identity is much more than a definition of oneself, it is a process, a permanent individual and collective changing construction.

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