A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SEPARATIST MOVEMENTS
IN CATALONIA AND SCOTLAND
AN HONORS THESIS
SUBMITTED ON THE 4th DAY OF MAY, 2021
TO THE DEPARTMENTS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND SPANISH & PORTUGUESE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
OF THE HONORS PROGRAM
OF NEWCOMB-TULANE COLLEGE
TULANE UNIVERSITY
FOR THE DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS
WITH HONORS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND SPANISH

BY

Emily J. Cohen

APPROVED:

Brittany Kennedy
Co-Director of Thesis

Mark Vail
Co-Director of Thesis

James Boyden
Third Reader
In the modern world, the lines drawn to define physical states do not always align with the “imagined communities” within these borders. Consequently, movements arise with groups who do not identify with the nation-state and thus do not feel part of it, which leads to the desire to separate from the physical state. In this thesis, I look at two well-known separatist movements: the case of Catalonia and its desired secession from Spain and Scotland and its desired secession from the United Kingdom (UK). These two movements have seen different outcomes of their independence referendums, with the majority of Scots voting to remain in the UK in a 2014 referendum while the majority of Catalans voted to leave Spain in an illegitimate and unrepresentative 2017 referendum, yet many underlying factors are similar between the two movements’ origins as well as the individuals in the regions’ claims of exceptionalism, notably a strong association with a European identity. My goal is to understand the differences between these two movements, and to what extent the identities of the regions and host states are reconcilable through observation of cultural identities of the regions compared to the host state and the economic relationships between the region and its host state. In order to do so, I compare and contrast sports in both places to serve as a microcosm for the respective separatist movement and the three-tiered relationships between the region, the host state, and the EU. I also look at how the recent success of Brexit has affected and will continue to affect these movements, particularly in the Scottish case.
# Contents

Introduction ................................................. 1

Methodology ................................................. 6

Literature Review ............................................. 9
Existing Scholarship on the Catalan and Scottish Separatist
Movements and How This Thesis Builds upon This Scholarship

Chapter 1 ....................................................... 27
Cultural Identity and Nation-Building:
The Regional vs. State Identity

Chapter 2 ....................................................... 51
Economic Factors in the Separatist Movements and How a
Disparate Identity leads to Differing Economic Contributions

Chapter 3 ....................................................... 72
Sports as a Microcosm for the Catalan and Scottish
Separatist Movements

Discussion and Concluding Remarks ................. 90

Bibliography .................................................. 95
**Introduction**

Since the creation of the modern state, there has never been a precise alignment of state borders with the nations within them, which often leads to various groups developing their own “imagined community”\(^1\) not defined by a nation-state’s geographical boundaries; therefore, that group begins to grow more distant from the host state and to desire autonomy and eventual separation from its host state. Nowhere is this clearer than in Catalonia within Spain and in Scotland within the United Kingdom (UK), where in the past decade, both communities have held independence referendums to separate from the host. Despite the similar origins of these two cases based on claims of exceptionalism by the region, both the external manifestations of these movements and, as of now, the actual outcomes of the referendum votes have differed significantly. Unlike the Scottish movement in the 21\(^{st}\) century, the Catalan separatist movement has been accompanied by violent protests and extreme conflict between the Spanish central government and the Catalan regional government. In 2017, the Catalan government held an independence referendum, defying the orders of the Spanish government. In this referendum, there was only a 43% turnout due to intimidation tactics by the Spanish government and fear, but an overwhelming majority of this group voted to leave Spain, leading to the Catalan declaration of independence. However, the Spanish government did not accept these results and instead sentenced leaders to harsh criminal punishments. Conversely, the Scottish separatist movement has been relatively more civil, and the UK prime minister at the time, David Cameron, permitted an independence referendum in

2014; however, Scots voted to remain a part of the UK. Therefore, this thesis will ultimately seek to answer two main questions: 1.) What has led to the differences in the Catalan and Scottish movements despite their similar frustrations, regional claims of exceptionalism compared to their host state, and ultimate goals? and 2.) Are the respective regional and state identities of Catalonia and Spain as well as Scotland and the UK reconcilable? I will also look at the question of how has Brexit, a successful populist movement, affected and will continue to affect these movements, particularly the Scottish case? Finally, after examining these differences, I will briefly explore the future implications of these movements for the European Union (EU) and the way this organization and the world in general thinks about and classifies communities, which possibly calls into question the entire idea of nation-states.

Ultimately, my hypothesis is that the reason that these two movements have had such differing results and external manifestations is related to the way that the host state’s central government has been able to connect the identity of the region to the overarching identity of the host state, with the British central government being more successful than the Spanish central government both historically and presently in portraying its state as having a multinational identity while the Spanish central government has consistently insisted upon a single Spanish nation based on a Castilian model. Catalans have sought to distinguish their region as a place symbolized by its capital, Barcelona, that has a modern culture and economy, making it different from the rest of Spain and more similar to a thriving, cosmopolitan European city, yet the Spanish central government has failed to recognize this distinction and continues to impose a Spanish identity upon Catalonia. With the combination of the Spanish central government not recognizing Catalan
distinctiveness and the Catalan economy being one of the strongest in Spain, a large part of the Catalan independence movement has centered around frustrations over the Spanish reliance on the Catalan economy without a recognition of Catalan exceptionalism.

Similarly, Scots have also maintained their own distinct culture and identity, which they see as highly connected to that of Europe, but because the British central government acknowledges a distinct Scottish nationality, Scots can somewhat successfully be both Scottish and British. However, while Scotland as compared to the rest of the UK possesses a unique economy based heavily on natural resources, it does not have the same economic position in its host state as Catalonia does in Spain and thus benefits from the strong British economy. Therefore, this economic balance combined with the fact that the British central government recognizes Scottish exceptionalism allows Scots to continue these individual economic contributions to the UK but still be a part of the greater British economy without minimizing distinct Scottish contributions.

Additionally, I believe that the EU further complicates these center-periphery relationships by adding another dimension and forcing individuals in the regions to form a balanced tri-layer identity that incorporates the identities of the region, the host state, and Europe. Because of these factors and the initial results of the independence referendums, I hypothesize that while the Spanish and Catalan identities are irreconcilable, the possibility for reconciliation between the Scottish and British identities did exist pre-Brexit. However, this main hypothesis is what I believe to reflect the majority of the history of these two separatist movements and the relations between the region and host state; however, the political and economic situations in both places are constantly changing, leading to a renegotiation of these ideas and relationships.
Therefore, this hypothesis cannot be said to be stable and constant throughout the entirety of the existence of these movements.

One example of the performative nature of this hypothesis is how the situation in Scotland in particular has changed post-Brexit. I posit that the UK’s decision to leave the EU combined with the ever-growing nationalism and anti-Scottish sentiments in England will lead to Scottish and British identities becoming irreconcilable and, consequently, a growing movement for a new Scottish referendum to leave the UK. A significant reason that Scots elected to remain in the UK in 2014 beyond their ability to maintain an identity that is both Scottish and British was also their ability to retain a broader European identity through the UK’s membership in the EU, and this idea of being European is, as I will explore later, crucial to Scottish exceptionalism. This three-layer identity, with being Scottish as the first layer, being British as the second layer, and being European as the third layer, has now been truncated since the UK voted to leave the EU, and Brexit has stimulated a resurgence of support for secession within Scotland. If Scots in the future are permitted by the British central government to hold a second independence referendum and subsequently vote to and successfully leave the UK, it will set a precedent and become entirely likely that supporters of secession in Catalonia will use the compliance of the British central government to put pressure on the Spanish central government to allow a legal referendum. Conversely, if the British central government does not allow a second independence referendum, which is entirely possible based on Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s current position on the issue, Scotland’s movement may

begin to look more like Catalonia’s movement with violent protests and strong animosity between the regional and central governments. However, whatever the case may be, it is clear that the longevity of these separatist movements and the existence of other imagined communities that feel distant from their host state demonstrate that the concept of nation-states is slowly growing more antiquated. Therefore, eventually, organizations, such as the EU, where membership is entirely based on the existence of nation-states might be forced to rethink their layouts in order to reflect the existence of more nations than states.
Methodology

In this thesis, the main research strategy that will be employed throughout is a comparative case study of the Catalan and Scottish separatist movements. Therefore, I will mainly analyze secondary sources, looking at the scholarly literature that has been written by experts on various parts of the movements in each region in order to synthesize elements that other scholars have seen as relevant in bolstering separatist sentiments in each region to create an overarching idea as to the main reasons for supporting secession in each region and how these reasons differ between Catalonia and Scotland. However, I will also analyze some primary sources, notably documents released by separatist parties in both regions, interviews, and newspaper articles, especially when I look at recent developments in the movements post-Brexit.

Ultimately, I will look at two overarching factors that I feel have contributed most strongly to the growth in the two separatist movements. The first chapter will look at how each region defines its own regional identity and the legitimacy of this identity in the host state; first, I will sketch defining characteristics of the cultural identity of each region, which will then be followed by an analysis of the relationship of the region’s identity to the overall identity of the host state. This chapter will then end with an understanding of how the identity of the region is connected to Europe and the EU. Chapter Two will follow the same format but will instead analyze the economic relations and prosperity of the two regions in a comparative way. In the same way as in Chapter One, I will first provide a short overview of the economies of both regions, followed by an analysis of how the regional economy relates to the host country. To conclude, I will analyze the connection of both regional economies to Europe and the EU. This consistent format for
the comparative case study will truly allow an understanding of how the particular
element in question contributes to the claims of exceptionalism and the emergence of the
separatist movements in both Catalonia and Scotland while also allowing a recognition as
to the differences between the two movements.

It is important to point out that in both Chapter One and Chapter Two, I look at
the factor being studied and understand how this connects to Europe and the EU. The
reason for this part of my methodology is that the entrance of both Spain and the UK into
the EU in the late 20th century has complicated the center-periphery relationships
between the regions and the host states. Additionally, the idea of being European is
important to claims of exceptionality in both Catalonia and Scotland. In fact, I have
selected to study these two cases instead of other regional separatist movements such as
those in Ireland and the Basque Autonomous Community (Euskadi) because of this
common thread. A major issue in both separatist movements is whether or not these
regions will be able to be stronger players and more involved in the EU upon separation
from the host state. Many Catalans believe that secession from Spain would give them a
more prominent role in the EU and allow Catalonia to develop to be a modern city in
Europe both culturally and economically. Scots, on the other hand, use their Europhilia
as a way to distinguish them from the English nation and feel as if separation from the
increasingly Eurosceptic England would allow them to integrate more into the EU and
become a more active member. Especially with the UK’s decision to leave the EU,
which automatically forces Scots to leave the EU as well, the desire to be linked to the
EU leads to increased support for secession among Scots. Therefore, a major part of my
research method will involve a demonstration of how this idea of “being European” is
connected to the way individuals in the regions see cultural identity and economic prosperity as parts of their claims of exceptionalism and calls for secession.

One final part of my methodology involves the use of sports as a microcosm for both the separatist movements and the more general center-periphery relationships that are complicated by Europe in these two cases, which will be the contents of Chapter Three. This representation will illustrate how both the cultural identity and economic elements and their different effects on each region’s separatist movement can be reflected in the varied ways sports are organized in the respective states and regions. The analogy also retains the tie to the common thread of Europhilia between the two separatist movements, as soccer, a major sport in Catalonia, Spain, Scotland, and the UK, universally retains a strong tie to “Europeanness,” as most major European cities have their own soccer team and major soccer tournaments annually, like the EuroCup, bring constant excitement and enthusiasm for their country’s team to individuals across Europe. This method using sports as a microcosm will provide a representation that makes it easier to visualize the center-periphery relationships in the two cases that are further complicated by the idea of Europe in addition to the similarities and differences between the movements.
Literature Review: Existing Scholarship on the Catalan and Scottish Separatist Movements and How This Thesis Builds upon This Scholarship

Due to the longevity of these two separatist movements, there is no shortage of academic works concerning them. Literature exists focusing on various parts of these separatist movements; however, as I will discuss later, what makes this thesis distinct from other studies is the synthesis of multiple topics underlying the two pro-independence movements into one cohesive idea as to why the movements differ. I will focus on literature written particularly in the field of political science by scholars on the specific parts of these two movements in which my research focuses—first, the distinct cultural identities of Catalonia and Scotland respectively and second, the economic situation of the region compared to the host state—that both contribute to claims of exceptionalism and calls to secede. I will also examine literature that discusses the role of sports in both separatist movements and look at the ways that various scholars have viewed this unique cultural aspect and significant part of both economies as contributing to claims of exceptionalism in Catalonia and Scotland.

Cultural Identity in Separatist Rhetoric

Clearly, both Catalonia and Scotland have defined their own identities that exist separately from the identities of their host states; however, where the movements differ in this regard is the legitimacy given to this identity and the extent to which this identity has been and currently is connected to the state identity. With regard to the connection between Catalan and Spanish identity, the prevailing scholarship discusses the disconnect between Catalan and Spanish cultural identity and how this gap contributes to the growth for support in secession, which provides support for my main idea that the Spanish
central government has failed to convey itself as a multinational state to Catalans and recognize a distinct Catalan nation. Whyte and Bernat in their article “Postfascism in Spain: The struggle for Catalonia” discuss the history of the suppression of Catalan culture throughout Spain’s history and argue that this same mentality remnant from Franco’s regime still exists to a certain extent in Spain through movements to boycott Catalan goods and undermine the legitimacy of the Catalan language, which heighten the sentiment amongst many pro-independence Catalans that their distinct cultural identity is not recognized by the Spanish central government.\(^1\) Accordingly, their overall argument that the Spanish desire to create a united Spanish identity suppresses the identity of regions like Catalonia aligns quite strongly with my hypothesis regarding the tense center-periphery relationship in the Catalan case. Bel conducted research by interviewing individuals throughout Spain, asking them which words they most associated with Europe as a whole, Spain as a whole, and each region of Spain more specifically. His research concludes that the Catalans represent the group with the most negative word associations; therefore, he argues that these results show that Catalonia is perceived throughout Spain as the most distant and different group.\(^2\) This research demonstrates that individual Spanish citizens do indeed recognize that Catalonia has a different identity than the majority culture of Spain; however, the Spanish central government continues to refuse to recognize a distinct Catalan nation or identity within the overall host state, in line with the Spanish central government’s failure at conveying a multinational identity.


Additionally, Serrano demonstrates the continued separation between Catalan and Spanish identities from the Catalan perspective, positing that the percentage of Catalans who identify with a predominant or exclusive Catalan identity has grown from 24% in 1979 to over 40% in the last decade. The existing scholarship thereby describes Catalonia as distinct while demonstrating how the Spanish central government has ignored this distinction both historically and presently.

While it is clear from scholarship that many Catalans view their identity as separate from the overall Spanish identity, scholars debate the exact influence that this idea of a separate identity has on the main arguments to separate from the host country, which demonstrates a key point to remember throughout my thesis: no single element can fully explain the growth in support for secession. This notion leads to the need to study other aspects, such as economic factors, in addition to cultural identity in order to gain an understanding of the exact reasons for the calls for secession from the host state.

According to Duerr, while he acknowledges a unique Catalan culture that is very distinct from Castilian culture, he argues that culture is not a central element of the Catalan pro-independence rhetoric and that it often takes a back seat to political autonomy and economic arguments. Conversely, Vaczi, Bairner, and Whigham argue that cultural factors are of the utmost significance in the Catalan movement and use F.C. Barcelona’s historical role in preserving Catalan identity during the time of its attempted suppression

---


to prove this point. However, many scholars such as Serrano take a position in between these two and argue that national identity and associating more strongly with a Catalan identity than a Spanish one is definitely a factor in the growth of support for secession but cannot be assumed to be the only factor nor even a necessary factor for supporting secession. Therefore, these differences in opinion demonstrate how no singular condensed idea can be said to fully explain the development of the Catalan separatist movement.

With respect to Scotland, scholars overwhelming agree that cultural identity plays a smaller role in the increase in support for Scottish secession than in the increase in support for secession in the Catalan case, which is in line with my argument that the British central government has more successfully conveyed the UK as a multinational state that is more inclusive of the distinct Scottish cultural identity and nation. Duerr has similar views on the role a distinct Scottish culture plays in the growth in support for secession as compared to his views on the Catalan movement and argues that Scots view themselves as having less of a unique culture than being a melting pot of different groups, so cultural elements play a less important role in the Scottish desires to secede. Dardanelli and Mitchell continue the overwhelming argument of the minimal role of cultural identity in the Scottish movement and argue that other aspects, such as political autonomy and everyday public policy, are more central factors in the rhetoric

---

surrounding the movement to secede. Anderson continues this argument and distinguishes it from the role of national identity in the Catalan separatist movement by arguing that, unlike the Spanish, the English accept Scotland as being its own nation and believe that Scotland and England are different countries residing in the same state. These arguments that establish that a distinct cultural identity plays a smaller role in the Scottish movement align with my overarching point that the British central government has been more successful in conveying a multinational identity that recognizes Scottish exceptionalism, which is dissimilar from in Spain where the central government tends to minimize Catalan distinctiveness.

In the existing literature in the field of political science, scholars debate the degree to which Scottish and British identity is connected, with some scholars postulating a stronger connection between British and Scottish identity than others; however, this disagreement supports my position that the British central government has been relatively successful in portraying a multinational identity, but the rise in English nationalism and anti-Scottish sentiments is beginning to diminish the Scottish-English connection. Some scholars describe the connection between Scottish and British identities as a fluctuating connection that has become less strong over time. For example, Mullen argues that, dissimilar from the history disconnecting Catalan and Spanish cultural identity, in the UK’s past, British leadership has been able to create a joint “British” identity felt by both

---


the Scottish and English through elements such as wars between 1707 and 1837, mainly with France, the majority Protestant religion to contrast with the Catholic majority in Europe, and the increasing of the welfare state in the early 20th century. However, changes eventually occurred, such as the diversification of religions in the UK, the end of wars that created a common enemy among the British, and the termination of the industrial revolution, which, combined, resulted in gradual separation between the Scottish and overall British identity. Similarly, Anderson contends that the separation between Scottish and British identity grew broader during Thatcher’s rule when she attempted to create a united British identity but ultimately imposed policies, most notably the rolling back of the welfare state, that were seen as anti-Scottish, which led many Scots to feel isolated. On the other hand, some scholars posit a stronger connection between a Scottish and overall British identity today. For example, Dardanelli and Mitchell contend that Scots have been able to successfully maintain a distinct national identity since the union of Scotland and England in 1707 due to the fact that the British central government never attempted to impose a uniform identity across the new state. However, they argue that a connection between Britishness and Scottishness clearly exists because most Scots identify as both Scottish and British. In a similar manner, Curtice provides survey results that show that the majority of Scots identify as a combination of both Scottish and British and that the number of Scots who identify as solely Scottish and not at all British has declined in recent years, which he argues, shows

---

12 Dardanelli and Mitchell, “An Independent Scotland?,” 89-95,
a continuing connection between Scottish and British identities. These survey results will prove critical as I demonstrate the British central government’s relative success in its portrayal of a multinational identity. Ultimately, the fact that scholars debate the connection between Scottish and British identities shows that at least some connection between the two exists, which differs from the Catalan case where nearly all scholars agree on the separation of Catalan and Spanish identities. This difference mirrors my claim that the British central government has been at least relatively more successful in conveying a multinational identity to the Scots than the Spanish central government has been to the Catalans.

**Economic Factors in Separatist Rhetoric**

Both regions have a distinct economy that currently exists within the greater framework of the host state’s economy. However, similar to the role that cultural identity plays in the increasing support for secession, scholars also discuss to what extent economic relationships, relative economic prosperity, and some fiscal autonomy all influence the level of support for secession in both regions. First, with regard to the effect of economic factors on the pro-independence movement in Catalonia, scholars almost universally agree that economic factors are significant; however, scholars debate their exact role in the growth of the secessionist movement. Ultimately, this disagreement again demonstrates that no single factor can explain the rise in support for the Catalan separatist movement. Catalan identity includes a notion of greater economic dynamism in Barcelona as compared to the rest of Spain and thereby connects economics

---

and identity to constitute the Catalan exceptionalism that the Spanish central government does not recognize in its idea of the identity of the Spanish nation-state. Some scholars argue that the economic factors play a relatively small role in the reason a Catalan will or will not vote for secession. Muñoz and Tormos contend through their study that while economic factors certainly play an independent and essential role in swaying an individual to vote to support Catalonia’s secession, they conclude that national identity, especially associating more strongly with being Catalan than Spanish, has the largest effect on whether or not an individual will support separation. Boylan also reaches a similar conclusion that ideas of national identity have the greatest influence on whether an individual supports secession; however, he, even more than Muñoz and Tormos, stresses that the desire for more economic autonomy is a driving force and the second most important factor behind national identity in increasing the desire to separate from Spain. Other scholars contend that economic factors play a larger role in the decision to vote for secession. Liñeira and Cetrà discuss how economic factors play a role due to the idea that secession from Spain is seen as the alternative that would increase the Catalan budget by removing the need to pay substantial taxes to the Spanish central government. Serrano reaches a similar conclusion and argues that the support of fiscal autonomy for Catalonia and the belief that Catalonia would be more successful economically if allowed to secede has both a positive and independent effect on

---


increasing support for secession.\textsuperscript{17} Therefore, since some scholars see economic prosperity as playing the largest role in a Catalan individual’s decision to support secession while other scholars see cultural identity as playing the largest role, it becomes clear that the increase in support for secession is based on a combination of multiple factors.

Scholars have also discussed the lack of fiscal autonomy granted to Catalonia and how this lack of autonomy, in return, leads to increased calls for secession, which I will argue is because it emphasizes the neglect of Catalan distinctiveness by the Spanish central government. Liñeira and Cetrà argue that economic factors are of special importance in the Catalan movement due to the region’s lack of fiscal autonomy when compared to the Basque Autonomous Community (Euskadi), which is able to set and collect most of its own taxes.\textsuperscript{18} Barón agrees and argues that support for independence has grown in Catalonia but decreased in the Basque region due to Catalonia’s lack of fiscal autonomy as compared to the greater fiscal autonomy in the Basque region.\textsuperscript{19} The economic differences between these two independence movements within the same state will be important to study in order to understand Catalan frustrations over the extent to which the Spanish central government recognizes the distinct economic contributions of the Basques but not as much the distinct economic contributions of the Catalans.

On the other hand, with regard to Scotland, scholars debate both the extent to which economic factors play a role in the increase in support for secession and how pro-

\textsuperscript{17} Serrano, “Just a Matter of Identity?,” 25.
\textsuperscript{18} Liñeira and Cetrà, “The Independence Case in Comparative Perspective,” 5.
independence supporters use Scottish economic factors to promote secession; however, scholars almost universally agree that economic factors contribute less to the movement in Scotland than they do to the movement in Catalonia. Since economic arguments can be made to support Scotland either leaving or staying in the UK, what the disagreeing information on economic factors demonstrates is that, as has been continuously shown, no one factor can explain the Scottish separatist movement. Here, economic factors are extremely connected to identity, and those Scots that see a predominantly Scottish identity will use an economic argument to justify leaving the UK just as Scots who have a more joint Scottish-British identity will employ economic arguments to justify staying in the UK. With regard to the actual role economic factors play in leading to the desire to separate from the UK, some scholars argue they do not play a significant role. For example, Liñeira and Cetrà argue that the idea of economic prosperity plays a smaller role in the Scottish case due to the fact that the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of Scotland is lower than the overall GDP per capita of the UK while in Catalonia, the regional GDP per capita is much higher than the state’s GDP per capita. Duerr makes essentially the same argument and claims that other places in the UK, most notably London, are considered to be stronger economic centers, so economic prosperity does not play the same role in the Scottish movement that it does in the Catalan movement. However, along with others, he does argue for some role of economic factors in leading to calls for secession, mainly through the Scottish National Party’s (SNP) arguments that Scotland is less economically successful as compared to similarly sized independent

---

states and that Scottish independence could improve the Scottish economy. Curtice continues the trend of arguing for a smaller but existing role for economic factors in leading to calls for secession and argues that the economic case for independence in Scotland is overall unproven since in his survey, approximately the same number of people answered that Scotland’s economy would be worse as an independent state as those who answered that it would be better. However, he did conclude that the way Scots believe secession will affect the economy strongly correlates with whether the individual will support or oppose independence, with those who believe that secession will lead to a better economy being significantly more likely to vote in favor of leaving and those who believe it will lead to a worse economy being more likely to vote to stay in the UK. In my thesis, I will explore the limited role of economic factors in the call for Scottish independence; however, I will mostly continue the idea advanced by scholars of the overall smaller role that economic factors play in the increase in calls for secession. The idea of Scottish dependence on the UK economy combined with the layout of the UK as a relatively multinational state where the central government acknowledges Scottish exceptionalism creates an entirely distinct situation from the Catalan one, leading to the majority of Scots voting to stay in the UK. Additionally, I will expand upon the existing literature on economic factors in the Scottish case and look at how Brexit might change the economic relationship of Scotland and the rest of the UK, which leads to a situation where Scots will need to consider the economic benefits of being in the UK versus the economic benefits of being in the EU.

The Role of Sports

Most scholarship written about sports in relation to these two separatist movements describes to what extent sports have played a role in the growth of support for separation in the respective region; therefore, on this topic, my work will specifically differ from existing studies, as I will be analyzing how sports in each region serves as an actual representation of the two regional movements and the center-periphery relationships in the two cases that are further complicated by Europe. However, many scholars have analyzed the extent to which sports, a significant cultural element and part of the economy in both Catalonia and Scotland, have served as an arena for the growth of separatist movements. Scholars who have studied the connection between sports and the pro-independence movements have observed how sports are connected to the underlying identity of a group, which will help me demonstrate how sports reflect national identity. First, Duerr with respect to Catalonia discusses how the motto of Barcelona’s main soccer team, F.C. Barcelona, is “més que un club” or, in English, “more than a club,” which demonstrates how soccer serves as an arena to air Catalan grievances and reflects the separate Catalan identity from the rest of Spain. Vaczi, Bairner, and Whigham elaborate further on the connection between Catalan sports and a distinct cultural identity and argue that Catalan teams are unfairly ineligible to compete in international sporting events like the World Cup and the Olympics. Instead, Catalan athletes are forced to play for Spain, leading to tensions between Catalans, Basque, and the rest of the players on the Spanish team that have resulted in significant troubles, especially for the Spanish national.

---

These scholars also argue that Catalans have historically and currently used the F.C. Barcelona soccer club as a way to keep their separate identity, stressing the importance of elections in the club to represent the democratic spirit of Catalonia, especially during Franco’s rule when Catalan identity and freedoms were particularly suppressed. With scholars agreeing upon the importance of F.C. Barcelona in creating and feeding Catalan exceptionalism, my thesis will take these ideas a step further to show how this club along with other aspects of Catalan sports can actually serve as a metaphor for the Catalan separatist movement and the center-periphery relationship in Spain.

With respect to the connection between Scottish cultural identity and sports, the existing literature describes how the fact that Scotland has its own sports leagues within the United Kingdom allows Scots to maintain their uniquely Scottish identity, which is an essential idea that I will utilize in my demonstration of how Scottish sports serve as a microcosm for the Scottish separatist movement. Duerr argues that the UK’s unique layout of sports allows for Scots’ maintenance of their own separate identity. Whigham, Lopez-Gonzalez, and Ramon take this argument a step further and contend that the unique layout of Scottish sports has allowed Scotland to maintain its own sense of nationhood. Vaczi, Bairner, and Whigham employ similar arguments about the unique layout of Scottish sports and claim that, with this organization, the lack of one clear team, like F.C. Barcelona, to serve as a pro-independence symbol leads to less of a
correlation between sporting nationalism and cultural nationalism.\textsuperscript{28} Whigham agrees with the previously mentioned arguments; however, he also offers a new idea. There are multiple Scottish teams that exist; therefore, there can be no one Scottish identity underlying the domain of sports.\textsuperscript{29} However, I will continue the idea advanced by the majority of scholars on the unique layout of British sports to show how this layout mirrors the British central government’s relative success in portraying the UK as a multinational state. In response to this last point by Whigham, I will argue that Scots are still able to unite around a single Scottish team when Scotland has made it to the World Cup, with this team representing the Scottish nation and exceptionalism.

While some literature exists that mentions connections between sports and economic factors and how the economics of sports affects the separatist movements, there are few sources focusing solely on this connection; therefore, my research can provide some new insights and demonstrate how the economic arguments for or against secession can be echoed in the economics of sports in the two states. Within the literature that exists on the economics of sports in Catalonia, Vaczi, Bairner, and Whigham note that sports would be an essential part of the economy of an independent Catalonia.\textsuperscript{30} In contrast, with respect to Scotland, Whigham and May describe the role sports could play in improving the economy of the small state that would be an independent Scotland;\textsuperscript{31} however, it is clear that it would not play the same role that it


would in an independent Catalonia. Overall, my thesis will add to this gap in literature on economics and sports in Catalonia and Scotland through an analysis focused on how the economics of sports, particularly the revenues brought in by sporting teams in the regions and the ability of the region to attract big-name athletes and sporting events, mirrors the economic arguments for and against secession and the economic relationships between the center and periphery instead of an analysis of how supporters of separation have championed economic arguments for secession through sports.

**How This Thesis Builds Upon This Existing Scholarship**

The research in this thesis is of special significance and builds upon the scholarship examined above in multiple ways. Unlike the previous work on this topic that has focused on examining how a specific element or elements contribute to the growth in the separatist movements, my ultimate goal in this thesis is to dive deeper. Therefore, I plan to synthesize the effects of the various factors that I will examine on the rise and fall of these two separatist movements and understand how they come together to lead to some desires to secede from the host state and to create different center-periphery relationships in the two cases. By the end of the thesis, I will demonstrate that the combination of the minimizing of Catalan exceptionalism by the Spanish central government with the fact that Spain significantly benefits from the unique economic contributions of Catalonia has ultimately led to increased support for Catalan secession. Conversely, a unique Scottish identity that is given legitimacy by the British central government combined with the mutually beneficial relationship between the Scottish and British economies, where wealth from Scottish resources strengthens the British economy but where Scots also gain economic stability from the greater British economy, has
created a situation where Scots, up to this point, have voted to stay in the UK.

Ultimately, I will argue that these differences in the Catalan and Scottish cases in both the connection between the regional and state identities and the economic relationships are based on the overarching idea of the British central government as more successful than the Spanish central government in portraying a multinational identity both internationally and to the regions and giving legitimacy to the peripheral identities. Therefore, through this synthesis, my thesis will help to connect the dots between the various elements that other scholars have posited contribute to the growing movements to separate from the host state and the reasons for the different outcomes of the independence referendums in the two regions. Additionally, I will show how this is a relative concept: the extent to which a region claims its distinctiveness is being ignored by the host state changes based on the relative prosperity or hardships faced by the host state at the time. When the host state is more prosperous as a whole, less internal divisions exist, which leads to less claims of the host state ignoring the regional exceptionalism along with less support for secession in the region. However, when the host state faces difficulties, more internal divisions exist, which leads to increased claims of the host state ignoring the regional exceptionalism along with increased support for secession in the region.

Another element that makes my thesis different is the specific methodology that I will employ that uses sports as a microcosm for the situations in Catalonia and Scotland within Spain and the UK respectively. Therefore, not only will I be synthesizing all of the individual elements contributing to the growth in separatist movements in both regions to connect to this overarching idea of the relative success of the British central government in presenting a multinational identity while the Spanish central government
has failed to present its state in this manner, but I will also show how the organization of sports in the respective states mirrors this idea. Ultimately the distinct organizations of sports in Spain and the UK demonstrate the differences in the cultural and economic relationships between the two regions and the host states that has subsequently led to differences in the results and external manifestations of the two movements. While, as noted previously, literature exists talking about sports in connection to the separatist movements, I have yet to find literature that uses sports as a metaphor of the movements and the center-periphery relationships. The use of this method will therefore help to strengthen and simply clarify my argument. Additionally, another unique element of my methodology is the use of the underlying relationship of both regions’ claims of exceptionalism with the idea of “being European” in each chapter, as this Europhilia is ultimately what connects these two cases and creates the vision that they are inherently similar while also complicating the center-periphery relationships. The use of this common theme throughout the thesis will serve as another way to synthesize the various elements that contribute to the rising calls for secession and will also serve as a point of commonality between the two movements despite the fact that the majority of the thesis will focus on a demonstration of the differences between the Catalan and Scottish cases.

The last element that makes this thesis unique is that, unlike the majority of scholarship examined in this literature review, my thesis will look at these separatist movements and the most central elements that have contributed to the rise and, in the Scottish case, fall followed by another rise, in support for secession both before and after the UK’s departure from the European Union. Since Brexit is a relatively recent development, very few scholars have discussed these separatist movements in a post-
Brexit world and even fewer have discussed the movements both pre-Brexit and post-Brexit. A discussion of the separatist movements both before and after the occurrence of Brexit permits an exploration of how Scots, when redeciding whether or not to secede from the UK, will need to consider vastly different questions and factors, which ultimately leads to different relationships between cultural identity and economic factors and their effects on the movement pre- and post-Brexit. Brexit demonstrates how one change in a state, in this case, the British vote to leave the EU, can completely alter the center-periphery relationship. Ultimately, while most of my thesis will center around the idea that Catalan and Spanish identities are separated and quite possibly irreconcilable, and in contrast, the possibility still existed for reconciliation between Scottish and British identities pre-Brexit, one vote that led to the UK leaving the EU completely changes this theory. In all, this thesis will help expand on existing literature to better understand these two separatist movements, why they differ, and how recent events may change the external manifestations and results of these two movements.
Chapter 1: Cultural Identity and Nation-Building: The Regional vs. State Identity

One of the hallmarks of any nation is the feeling of a distinct cultural identity that separates it from other groups. Benedict Anderson asserts that “a nation is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”¹ In this chapter, I will explore the aspects that constitute each region’s cultural identity, the extent to which the region’s identity is connected to or disconnected from the host state’s national identity, and the extent to which both regions’ identities are connected to the idea of being European. Ultimately, the goal of this chapter is to explore the relationships between regional and state identity and how these relationships differ between Catalonia and Scotland in addition to how these relationships are constantly being renegotiated over time, leading to increases or decreases in desires to secede that align with the relative recognition of and the way of managing regional identity in the state by the central government. Both Catalonia and Scotland have clearly defined cultural identities distinct from the identity of their host states, and many individuals in these two regions justify a desire to secede based on a desire to be governed by those with whom they identify. However, in the past two decades in particular and up to Brexit, the British central government has been more successful than the Spanish central government in recognizing a multinational identity of the state and providing legitimacy to the Scottish nation while the Spanish central government has continuously denied this same recognition of legitimacy to Catalonia by refusing to recognize a Catalan nation. Nevertheless, the development and execution of the Brexit movement changes this

narrative, with this movement representing a slow-growing separation between the
Scottish and British identities based on an English nationalism within the state that sees
the English as the superior nation in the state and therefore undermines the Scottish
identity. 2 Therefore, Brexit alters the extent to which the British central government is
able to successfully reconcile the Scottish and overall British identities and to continue to
present the UK as a relatively multinational state with a separate Scottish identity,
possibly changing the outcomes of a future Scottish independence movement and
referendum.

**Defining Culture and Identity**

Culture is an extremely broad concept with no one definition that encompasses all
aspects of the term. Generally, an agreed upon definition of culture is something that is
shared and learned by a group of people that creates a sense of unity between the
individuals; however, what exactly is shared and learned can encompass a wide range of
areas and is socially constructed by the individuals within the territory. 3 The elements of
culture can thereby encompass any aspect a group sees as important to its personal
identity, which can include observable elements such as language, art, architecture,
sports, and cuisine, but also includes abstract ideas such as shared mindsets, beliefs, and
values. These elements of culture shape the national identity of a group of people,
creating an overarching image of the people within a specific united territory. 4 However,

---

2 “Brexit and English Nationalism,” *The Economist*, January 30, 2020,
3 Aliaksandr Birukou et al., “A Formal Definition of Culture,” in *Models for Intercultural Collaboration and Negotiation*, ed. Katia Sycara, Michele Gelfand, and Allison Abbe, Advances in Group Decision and Negotiation (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2013), 3-4, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-5574-1_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-5574-1_1).
in post-Enlightenment Europe, a concept of nationalist ideology emerged grounded in the claim that each nation should have its own state and that the people were the center of the nation rather than the crown, church, or aristocratic elites. Catalonia and Scotland therefore each have their own people, culture, and, consequently, national identity, and this idea that developed in post-Enlightenment Europe serves as the basis for claims for secession based on national identity underlying the separatist movements in both regions.

**Defining Catalan and Scottish Cultural Identities**

Before discussion of the role that the Catalans and Scots’ claims of exceptionalism related to their host nations’ identities play in the growth of separatist movements in the regions, it is important to have a clear understanding of how each group defines its own distinct culture. First, with regard to Catalan culture, while many scholars on the Catalan separatist movement claim that Catalans have a unique culture and that this culture leads to a reason to separate, few scholars actually define what constitutes this distinct Catalan culture. Within Catalonia and Spain, an important distinguishing factor I want to convey is that throughout this thesis, I adopt the idea of Barcelona being symbolic of Catalonia and Catalan culture and Madrid being symbolic of “establishment Spain” and the Spanish central government in particular. This representation reflects the “Madrid-Barcelona” dichotomy that scholars often employ when referring to this “center-periphery” relationship between Catalans and the Spanish central government. Therefore, this Catalan culture described mainly reflects the culture of Barcelona. Many Catalans themselves describe this culture as connected to the works

---

of Gaudi, F.C. Barcelona, and their own Catalan language. Further elaboration on this
definition of Catalan cultural identity shows that Catalan culture includes not only the
Catalan language but also the multilingual nature of the Catalan society, its literature and
art, its rich set of traditions and folklore, its individual civil law institutions, and its
history of being the dominant unit within the self-government Crown of Aragon until the
end of the War of Succession in 1714. From these multiple ideas of what constitutes
Catalan culture, ultimately four ideas stand out to me as truly defining the Catalan
culture—the first being the specific Catalan language and the use of multiple languages
in the region, the second being a shared history which includes long periods of being self-
governed and self-sustaining, the third being the modernity of Catalonia through its
artwork, sports, architecture, etc., and the final idea being a connection to Europe and a
strong association with being European. For the most part, the Spanish central
government prefers to imagine the Catalan identity as a part of the Spanish national
identity instead of its own distinct nation, denying the idea of Spain as a multinational
state but instead a state with a singular identity that represents the nation of Spain as a
whole.

On the other hand, the idea of Scottish culture and identity, despite growing
multiculturalism in Scotland, tends to maintain a strong ethnic and territorial component
about the idea of being a native-born Scot. This idea is mainly due to the fact that, as I

---

will continue to elaborate on throughout this thesis, the British central government recognizes the UK as a multinational state and thereby acknowledges a Scottish nation, allowing Scots to maintain and develop an identity that is defined by their territorial boundaries and remains distinct from the other nations in the UK. Of special importance to this identity is the physical territory of Scotland, with the idea of the greenery and landscape defining the essence of being Scottish according to many Scots. However, Scots also claim other aspects as essential parts of their culture. Their definition of Scottish culture includes observable concepts such as Scottish sports, Scottish music and arts, and the traditional languages of Scotland: Gaelic and Scots, yet it also includes values and abstract ideas, most notably the notion of equality for all citizens and egalitarianism. Ultimately, from these many elements, four concepts overall encompass the idea of Scottish culture—the first being its shared history from being a self-governing state until the Acts of Union of 1707, the second being the still-present traditional aspects of being Scottish such as the Gaelic or Scots language, their own church, customary clothing, and music and the arts, the third being shared Scottish values, most notably egalitarianism, and the final being a connection to the greater Europe. These four elements define the nation of Scotland, and the British central government has been more successful than the Spanish central government has in recognizing regional distinctiveness and thereby giving legitimacy to the region in question.

11 Ibid., 549-552.
Catalan and Scottish Cultural Identities in Relation to Host Country

Ultimately, in this section, I will demonstrate three ways in which the separate national identities between Catalonia and Spain as well as Scotland and the rest of the UK have contributed to calls for secession in the two cases. These three ways are the history of public policies and mentalities from after the Enlightenment into the 21st century that have minimized the identity of Catalonia and Scotland respectively, the exact way that individuals in Catalonia and Scotland see their culture and whether or not this can at all be reconciled with the larger state identity, and the current views of politicians and members of the central government on the distinct identity of the region. The differences between Catalonia and Scotland in these three areas ultimately align with the idea that the British central government has been more successful than the Spanish central government in conveying itself as a multinational state, consistently recognizing a Scottish nation and thereby giving legitimacy to Scottish identity. The Spanish central government, on the other hand, has refused to recognize a distinct Catalan nation and stressed the idea that the state only has one Spanish nation. Subsequently, these major differences in center-periphery relationships create similarly disparate results and external manifestations of Catalonia and Scotland’s separatist movements.

First, a main difference between the cultural elements of calls for secession in Catalonia and Scotland is the nation-building projects adopted by the central government of the host state. The success of the central governments in creating a sense of national identity throughout the entire states has varied throughout the two states’ history based on the overall background events at the moment, most specifically, the relative prosperity of the state at the given time; however, throughout the majority of history, the British central
government has given more legitimacy to Scotland than the Spanish central government has to Catalonia. As best explained by Greer, the main difference with regard to the history of nation-building between the Catalan and Scottish cases is that the Spanish central government tried but failed to destroy the Catalan nation in order to create a unified Spanish identity through attempts to minimize Catalan distinctiveness and create one Spanish identity. Conversely, the British central government never fully tried to eliminate the national identity that existed within Scotland, allowing for the preservation of a Scottish nation to demonstrate Scottish distinctiveness.

With regard to the Spanish nation-building project and its relation to the developed Catalan identity, the period in the 19th century following the War of Independence (1808-1814), a time of great prosperity for Spain as a whole, marked an essential point in the creation of the idea of a unified Spanish national identity and a time in which Catalans were more willing to be a part of this identity. This period sought the “modernization of the Spanish state” based on the modern idea of the European nation-state, which the central government interpreted to mean the removal of regional power and identities and the centralization of state power and identity in Madrid based on Castilian ideas and cultures. Castilian culture became the center of Spanish cultural identity, with upper-level education and writers centered in Madrid, the adoption of a historical narrative based from the perspective of the Castilians, the Castilian language becoming known internationally as “Spanish,” the adoption of the Castilian coat of arms as a national symbol, and various other adoptions of Castilian regional cultural elements.

into the new unified Spanish culture and identity.\textsuperscript{14} Simultaneously, a period known as “Catalan Rebirth” began in Catalonia, not representing a fracture from the rest of Spain but symbolizing the resurgence of Catalan culture and language in line with the industrial revolution in Catalonia, leading to great economic success for Barcelona, which I will discuss further in Chapter Two.\textsuperscript{15} However, hardships struck Spain with the loss of its colonies during the War of 1898, which resulted in Spain being perceived as lagging on progress and modernity as compared to the rest of Europe.\textsuperscript{16} This crisis then led to the spurring of the modern versus traditional dichotomy of Barcelona versus Madrid that exists today and underlies desires to secede based on identity and demonstrates the concept of increased nationalism during times of hardship. While Spanish nationalism was redeveloped throughout the 20\textsuperscript{th} century focusing again on the ideals of Castilla, Catalan nationalism continued to develop, and, as a result of this peripheral nationalism, authoritarian and centralist Spanish nationalism emerged along with attempts to suppress the distinctiveness of Catalonia and other regions.\textsuperscript{17} However, this in turn, only led to a more strongly united Catalan nationalism and calls for increased regional autonomy, beginning a cycle of increasing center and peripheral nationalisms that has persisted throughout Spanish history.

Ultimately, the Spanish Civil War symbolized the fight between Spanish nationalism and the peripheral nationalism of regions like Catalonia.\textsuperscript{18} When Francisco Franco won the war and became the ruler of Spain, Catalan nationalism heightened as

\textsuperscript{14} Smith, “Catalonia in the Spanish Nation-Building Project,” 42-46.
\textsuperscript{15} Muro and Quiroga, “Building the Spanish Nation,” 21-23.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 24.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 24-26.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 27.
Franco intended to impose a singular image of the Spanish culture, identity, and society, which did not include any aspects of traditional Catalan culture and identity, and completely disregarded and even suppressed the identities of all the regions of Spain perceived as “not Spanish.” This suppression affected Catalonia in particular because of the major economic and cultural force of Barcelona, with the attempted elimination of all aspects of Catalan culture and any form of autonomy through the prevention of the use of the Catalan language in public and the complete alteration of Catalan education, literature, television, and radio.\textsuperscript{19} However, following the cycle mentioned above, the suppression of Catalan identity by Franco only led to increased Catalan nationalism.\textsuperscript{20} Furthermore, while 1978 marked the transition from Franco’s dictatorship involving the official suppression of Catalan identity to the new, more inclusive Spanish democracy and attempted to solve the center-periphery tensions, this transition did not mark the end of the ignoring of a unique Catalan identity and the persistence of the idea of one Spanish identity.\textsuperscript{21} Although the Constitution of 1978 provided more autonomy for Catalonia, including protection of the Catalan language, it also referred to Castilian Spanish as the official language of Spain and to specific regions of Spain, including Catalonia, as “autonomous communities” rather than nations, denying, in part, their legitimacy and distinct identity from the rest of the state.\textsuperscript{22} Ultimately, throughout the history of the Spanish nation-building project, the relationship between the center nationalism and


\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{22} Anderson, “Scotland and Catalonia,” 6.
peripheral identities has varied, with a stronger relationship existing between the center and periphery during times of prosperity and a continuous cycle of attempts to suppress regional nationalism having the opposite effect. However, it is clear that the Spanish nation-building plan has been built around ideas of Castilian culture, which has led to the current mindset of the failures of the Spanish central government to convey a multinational identity and recognize Catalan distinctiveness.

On the other hand, despite historical periods in the UK of the central government’s neglect of the unique culture and needs of the Scots, the history of the UK demonstrates that the British central government, different from that of Spain, has never specifically sought to eliminate the idea of a Scottish nation. The British central government instead has simply embraced its state’s existence as a nation of nations and has not focused on creating a unified national identity, which allowed the culture of Scotland to remain separate, and in fact, specific policies were implemented to allow the maintenance of Scottish culture such as policies which ensure the continuity of an independent church, legal system, and education system. However, without attempted suppression, certain events and commonalities throughout British history, most notably religion and war, did create ties between the Scottish and British identities. The majority of the United Kingdom, in this essential time of nation-building, shared similar religious beliefs of Protestantism which stood in sharp contrast to the strong Catholicism in much of Europe. Similarly, the British expansion of its empire through various wars reinforced

a shared sense of identity, as the country was united in its struggles against foreigners.\footnote{25}{Tom Mullen, “The Scottish Independence Referendum 2014,” \textit{Journal of Law & Society} 41, no. 4 (December 2014): 636-38, \url{https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6478.2014.00688.x}.} Additionally, the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century led to a time of relative prosperity for the state as a whole,\footnote{26}{Ibid.} which decreased claims of Scottish exceptionalism. While these unifying identity factors were relatively short-lived due to changes in the UK and the rest of the world, they helped to instill some sense of a joint British-Scottish identity instead of the British central government imposing a unified identity on the state that did not represent the culture of the regions, as was the case with the Spanish central government and Catalonia.

Despite the fact that the British central government has been more successful overall in allowing Scottish culture and identity to remain distinct within the UK, there have been certain times when many Scots did not feel included in the British identity and values. The most notable moment in which Scottish identity appeared entirely distinct and unrepresented in the greater UK was during the government of Margaret Thatcher from 1979-1991, which ultimately became the catalyst for Scotland to develop more autonomy and its own parliament.\footnote{27}{Anderson, “Scotland and Catalonia,” 4-5.} Thatcher’s conservative government stood in sharp contrast to Scotland’s more liberal leaning electorate, causing many Scots to feel as if Thatcher’s policies were anti-Scottish and not representative of the needs of Scotland,\footnote{28}{Mullen, “The Scottish Independence Referendum 2014,” 637-638.} reflecting a moment in which Catalans and Scots’ calls for more autonomy shared similarities. Simultaneously, as Spain’s attempt to establish itself as a new democracy and rebuild itself as a nation with an identity that, for the most part, neglected the
multinational character of the state stifled Catalan distinctiveness, the ideologies and values that were being portrayed as British under Thatcher’s government did not reflect those of Scotland. Ultimately, this underrepresentation led to strong support among Scots for more autonomy, which parallels the calls for autonomy among Catalans that were somewhat granted during the creation of the new Spanish Constitution of 1978. Scots received more autonomy and their own parliament in the Scottish Act of 1998, and unlike in Catalonia where autonomy has not significantly weakened regional nationalism, the granting of more autonomy to Scots both in 1998 and following the independence referendum in 2014 has minimized calls for secession. For the most part, the same cycle that has existed in Spain, with Catalan nationalism leading to increased Spanish nationalism, has not existed in the UK, with the British central government being more accepting of a distinct Scottish nation and the relative prosperity of British society; however, the rising English nationalism in the last decade that culminated in Brexit has changed this relationship, resurfacing support for secession among Scots.

Based on these histories of the two regions’ relationships to their host nations, the two regions differ presently in how individuals in them distinguish their cultural identity from the cultural identity of the overall host state. Many Catalans view their culture as modern and cosmopolitan as compared to the traditional culture of the rest of Spain, with Barcelona consistently being several years ahead of Madrid in cultural trends throughout history. While Madrid and the rest of traditional Spanish identity has been defined by classic literature like Don Quixote and traditional art like that of Velázquez, Catalonia has

---

served as the cultural center that is receptive to new ideas and change in literature, architecture and the arts, represented in the works of Gaudi, Picasso, and other Catalan writers, artists, and architects.\textsuperscript{30} After attempts to modernize the Spanish state failed, Catalans have come to see secession as a way to be perceived internationally as a more legitimate modern nation.\textsuperscript{31} The modernity of Catalan culture through means such as the unique architecture of Gaudi sets the region apart from the rest of Spain.\textsuperscript{32} An example of the dichotomy of Catalan modernity versus Spanish traditionalism is reflected in the region’s attempt to ban bullfighting—a practice that is still an important part of the cultural identity of the Spanish nation. However, Spain’s High Court ultimately overturned this attempted ban due to the fact that bullfighting is a part of Spanish heritage,\textsuperscript{33} demonstrating the idea of a desired Catalan distinctiveness based on modernity and the Spanish central government’s unwillingness to accept this idea. The Spanish central government’s insistence on a unified Spanish nation and refusal to recognize a Catalan nation have led to increased desires to secede among Catalans, partly based on the idea that Catalans desire international recognition as a modern state but are trapped in the traditional image of the Spanish state.

On the other hand, the main way in which Scots see themselves and their culture as different from the rest of the UK is based upon values rather than upon a distinct cultural aspect. While there certainly are many Scottish traditions, foods, holidays, and

\textsuperscript{30} Walters, “Introduction,” 2-8.
\textsuperscript{31} Whigham, Lopez-Gonzalez, and Ramon, “‘Més Que Un Joc?,’” 224.
festivals that do not exist in the rest of the UK, the same modern versus traditional
dichotomy of Catalonia versus Madrid does not exist to the same extent in the Scottish
case. This difference is because, in line with the idea of the United Kingdom as a
multinational state, it is a state full of different cultural traditions, leading to claims that
the cultural elements have mostly disappeared from the rhetoric surrounding support for
secession in Scotland. Instead, a major difference is that Scots tend to value liberalism
and egalitarianism while the rest of the UK, specifically England, has become
increasingly more conservative, and Tory governments have cut welfare policies.
These ideas are proven in survey results, with more Scots than English agreeing that it is
wrong that people with higher incomes can buy better education and that the distribution
of income in the UK is unfair. Therefore, specific policy decisions that are viewed by
many Scots as being made from afar tend to focus on cuts to the welfare state,
demonstrating to a certain extent a lack of consideration for Scottish values and
consequently Scottish identity. Ultimately, these abstract values of liberalism and
egalitarianism rather than tangible cultural elements offer the most distinction between
the Scottish and English identities; however, because of some Scottish autonomy,
particularly over certain taxation powers, the egalitarian part of Scottish identity has still
been able to exist to a certain extent within the UK.

Lastly, how the central government and citizens of Spain and the UK view the distinct cultures of Catalonia and Scotland respectively is vastly different, with the British central government and politicians able to recognize the exceptionalism of Scotland to a greater extent than the Spanish central government and politicians. In Spain, a growing number of Spanish nationalists, notably leaders of the Partido Popular, like Pablo Casado, and, in more extreme forms, leaders of Vox, like Santiago Abascal, desire to emphasize the unity of the Spanish identity by downplaying the cultural distinctiveness of regions such as Catalonia. This notion has continued the cycle that I mentioned earlier—many Catalans continue to feel their distinct identity is ignored, leading to increased Catalan nationalism and support for secession, but these calls for separatism then lead to more extreme centralized Spanish nationalism and a stronger fight to suppress identities of the regions. This suppression can be seen in its most extreme forms in Catalanophobia, where those on the extreme right, both inside and outside of the Partido Popular, have lobbied for the boycott of all goods from Catalonia. Eventually, this cycle has progressed to what we see in Spain today—increased Catalan nationalism, including the 2017 independence referendum, accompanied by a simultaneous rise in far-right Spanish nationalism as seen through the rhetoric of the Partido Popular in addition to the rise of new political parties, most notably the far-right nationalist party Vox and the more center-right party Ciudadanos, which centers its agenda around opposition to Catalan independence. In the eyes of many Catalans, some of Spain’s more leftist

---

political parties have also even begun to reject the notion of a distinct Catalan identity. Jéssica Albiach, the leader of the left-wing En Comú Podem in the Catalan Parliament, has asserted in reference to Pedro Sánchez, the Prime Minister of Spain and leader of the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (PSOE), “He has moved away from a discourse that recognizes Spain’s plurinational character…” This notion consequently has led to rejection of claims of multinationalism in Spain due to the belief that they threaten the unity of a Spanish nation; however, this opposition only continues the cycle and then leads to increased Catalan nationalism and calls for secession.

In the United Kingdom, the central government and its politicians overall have been more accepting of claims of Scottish exceptionalism, recognizing Scotland as a nation. The British central government, through its efforts to grant Scotland autonomy and even permit an independence referendum, creates a somewhat cordial relationship between the central government and Scotland in spite of differences between England, the predominant culture of the UK, and Scotland. The British government therefore acknowledges the unique identity of Scotland and its consequent importance in creating the overall identity of the UK. David Cameron, the British Prime Minister who permitted the Scottish referendum, remarked to Scots ahead of the 2014 referendum, “We desperately want you to stay; we do not want this family of nations to be ripped apart.”

This statement by itself shows the main distinction between the British and Spanish

---

approaches to the separatist movements by their central governments. The British central
government’s welcoming of Scottish identity and conveyance of a multinational UK
nevertheless only goes so far, as anti-Scottish sentiments have continued to exist among
many English and as English nationalism grows, which is demonstrated through the
vote to leave the UK and Boris Johnson’s unwillingness to allow a second Scottish
independence referendum. This growing English nationalism has then led to increased
Scottish nationalism and support for Scottish independence, similar to the rise in Scottish
nationalism during the government of Margaret Thatcher, which reflects the same cycle
of center-periphery nationalism that has existed in Spain. Therefore, while Scottish
desires to secede have been subdued as compared to Catalan desires in the recent century
based on recognition of a Scottish nation in the UK, the growing English nationalism is
changing this center-periphery relationship and may lead to the Scottish movement
looking more like the Catalan movement.

Catalan and Scottish Cultural Identities in Relation to Europe and the EU

In addition to the relationship between central and periphery identities that is
continuously changing and being renegotiated in these cases, the creation and joining of the
EU adds another relationship and element of identity for the two regions. One essential
component of both Catalonia and Scotland’s cultural identities that has contributed to
calls for secession is both regions’ strong association with Europe and the EU. In both
regions, historical and current ties exist between the regional identity and a European

identity, notably the modernity idea in Catalonia and the values of Scotland. This connection to Europe as part of the Catalan and Scottish identity compares to their respective host state’s relationship with Europe, distinguishing the regional identities from the overall state identities. The Spanish identity is less strongly tied to the EU based on Spain’s historical status as an outsider in the organization due to its late date of joining and its perceived economic inferiority, demonstrated by the PIIGS (Portugal, Iceland, Italy, Greece, and Spain) acronym that references the Eurozone economies with the highest debt.\footnote{Mark Koba, “PIIGS: CNBC Explains,” \textit{CNBC}, August 11, 2011, sec. CNBC Explains, \url{https://www.cnbc.com/id/44058478}.} Similarly, the UK never fully integrated into the EU, refusing to adopt parts of the EU’s programs such as the currency and now has completely cut ties with the EU through the Brexit vote.

First, to many Catalan individuals, being European is synonymous with modernity, and this European modernity reflects a large part of the Catalan claims of exceptionalism that highlight that the Catalan are not Spanish and are, in fact, better because Catalans embrace Europe and are thus more modern.\footnote{Muro and Vlaskamp, “How Do Prospects of EU Membership Influence Support for Secession?,” 1116-1118.} As indicated previously, a large part of the Catalan identity is based on the modernity of their culture and society, especially as compared to the traditionalism that defines Spanish culture in the eyes of the global community. Therefore, the idea of pro-Europeanness widespread among the Catalan population serves as the new alternative for the previous Catalan desires for the modernization of the Spanish state.\footnote{Benito Giordano and Elisa Roller, “Catalonia and the ‘Idea of Europe’: Competing Strategies and Discourses within Catalan Party Politics,” \textit{European Urban and Regional Studies} 9, no. 2 (April 1, 2002): 99-101, \url{https://doi.org/10.1177/096977640200900201}.} While Madrid was still stuck in the traditional
image of Spanish identity remnant from Franco, Catalans focused on Spain joining the EU and on being the most active region of Spain in the European field. The reason for this focus is because Spain was late to become a member, representing the lack of economic prosperity that ran concurrent to a lack of modernity perceived in the Spanish central government, and many Catalans saw the EU as a new vision of modernity. From the moment Spain joined the EU, Catalans have focused on building Barcelona, not Madrid, to be a city that represents European modernity parallel to that of Paris, represented through Barcelona’s hosting of the Olympics in 1992 that I will discuss further in Chapter Three. Therefore, the argument regarding a European identity by pro-independence Catalans centers on the fact that to be perceived as having a modern, European culture, Catalonia needs to break away from the traditional image of Spanish identity that is often perceived by the outsider as being “non-European.”

Similarly, many Scots also see Europe as an essential part of their identity, but this similarity, coinciding with where the Scottish feel especially distinct from and unrepresented in the UK, is based more strongly on shared Scottish values with the EU that are less prevalent within the rest of the UK. For years and especially since the government of Margaret Thatcher, the Scots have projected their Europhilia as an

---

51 Ibid.
alternative to Eurosceptic England.\textsuperscript{55} Just as Thatcher’s policies were viewed by many Scots as anti-Scottish, going against their best interests and ultimately suppressing the core value of egalitarianism underlying the Scottish identity, these policies can also be viewed as anti-European, going against the similar European value of egalitarianism.\textsuperscript{56} Scots and specifically the SNP continue to champion themselves as Europhiles and demonstrate that their values align with those of the EU through policies such as allowing all EU citizens to gain a free undergraduate education in Scotland.\textsuperscript{57} While most Scots do feel some sort of Britishness in their identity, the strong ties and commonalities between Scotland and Europe complicate this relationship and serve as a clear place where Scottish and British identity diverge.

While up until recently, Scots have been in a place where they could remain in the United Kingdom and keep some combination of three identities: Scottish, British, and European, the growing English nationalism culminating in the 2016 Brexit referendum has forced Scots to renegotiate its relationships with both the UK and the EU.\textsuperscript{58} While the majority of British citizens ultimately voted to leave the EU, a majority of Scots voted to remain in the EU, yet because their region is still a part of the UK, Scots were forced to leave the EU against their will.\textsuperscript{59} Brexit, not surprisingly, has led to revived support

\textsuperscript{55} Muro and Vlaskamp, “How do Prospects of EU Membership Influence Support for Secession,” 1118.
\textsuperscript{56} “Egalitarian and Socially Inclusive Europe,” European Commission, July 24, 2012, \url{https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/42610}.
for the separatist movement in Scotland and, consequently, calls for another referendum to decide whether or not Scotland wants to remain in the UK.\textsuperscript{60} In June 2016 following the Brexit vote, 53\% of Scots said they would vote to leave the UK, as compared to the 44.7\% that voted to leave the UK in the 2014 referendum.\textsuperscript{61} While, in the past, the British central government has managed to not squash the identity of Scotland, as is the case with the Spanish central government and Catalan identity, and instead, allowed for Scotland to maintain its distinct culture and identity while still being a part of the UK, the UK’s decision to leave the EU, which does not reflect the desires of Scottish citizens, completely alters this layout, leading to a situation much like the Catalan one where British identity, here based on separation from the EU, does not represent Scottish identity. This change creates a potential inability to reconcile the Scottish and greater British identities and, thus, possibly will lead to a similar situation to the Catalan one with increased support for independence but refusal of the central government to allow this separation.

**Overall Implications of Cultural Identity for Separation**

In both Catalonia and Scotland, the idea of identity is of extreme importance as to how an individual will vote in an independence referendum for its region. As this chapter has demonstrated, it is clear that both Catalans and Scots have a unique cultural identity; however, the extent to which individuals in the region are able to associate their identity with both their region and the host state is different in Catalonia and Scotland. As

\textsuperscript{60} Nicola Sturgeon, “Brexit Changed the Game on Scottish Independence,” POLITICO, January 1, 2021, https://www.politico.eu/article/uk-brexit-changed-game-on-scottish-independence/.

expected, support for separation is correlated with a stronger feeling of a regional identity than state identity; when more of the population’s identity in the respective region is detached from the identity of the host state, support for secession is stronger.

First, with regard to Catalonia, the idea of a strong Catalan identity has grown in recent years. This growth can be seen via the results of a survey that asked Catalan citizens to describe their identity as being only Catalan, more Catalan than Spanish, equally Catalan and Spanish, more Spanish than Catalan, or only Spanish. Since 1978, the number of Catalan individuals who identify as predominantly or exclusively Catalan has nearly doubled, representing approximately 40% of Catalans surveyed, while the number of Catalan individuals who identify as predominantly or exclusively Spanish has been reduced by half, representing only 15% of Catalans surveyed. This change has corresponded with the increased support for Catalan secession from Spain, supporting the idea that a distinct Catalan cultural identity has played a role in the growth in support for secession and influenced the results of the 2017 referendum. The fact that the number of individuals who identify as predominantly Catalan and less Spanish also demonstrates the cycle I have discussed throughout this chapter, with increased centralized nationalism that minimizes regional distinctiveness leading to increased peripheral nationalism and consequent desires to secede.

Conversely, given the United Kingdom’s permissiveness to accept a distinct Scottish nation within the country, it is no surprise that when Scots are surveyed about their identity, identifying as “Scottish” is more widespread than identifying as “British,”

---

just as identifying as “Catalan” is more widespread than identifying as “Spanish” in Catalonia.\(^63\) However, as opposed to in Catalonia, where the number of individuals who identify as only or predominantly Catalan has seen tremendous growth, the number of individuals in Scotland who deny Britishness in their identity has declined. While between 1999 and 2006, the percentage of the Scottish public who deny British identity was never less than 30%, since 2007, it has declined to mid to high 20%.\(^64\) Because the British central government pre-Brexit has recognized a Scottish nation without a major increase in centralized nationalism to minimize peripheral distinctiveness, most Scots today are able to recognize that their identity and culture can exist within the UK without being lost, therefore, incorporating some form of Britishness into their identity. This development, in turn, has led to decreased calls for secession and, consequently, Scots choosing to stay in the UK in 2014. However, I will be interested to see how these survey results have changed with the increased English nationalism that culminated in the Brexit vote, as the center-peripheral relationship has been greatly altered.

**Conclusion**

Overall, a main reason for the difference between the Scottish and Catalan separatist movements is that the British central government has been more willing to accept that the UK is a multinational state and consequently recognize a distinct Scottish cultural identity in addition to the existence of a Scottish nation while the Spanish central government has consistently refused this same recognition of a Catalan nation. Ultimately, this idea has created a cycle in Spain where centralized nationalism that

---


\(^{64}\) Ibid.
focuses on a unified Spanish identity has led to increased Catalan nationalism, which then leads to more centralized nationalism, and the cycle continues. This center-periphery relationship has ultimately characterized Spanish history and has led to the contention surrounding the Catalan separatist movement that exists today. Conversely, due to a more prosperous society in the UK, this cycle has been less apparent, as the British central government has recognized a Scottish nation and appeased Scottish nationalists by permitting an independence referendum, leading to Scots voting to stay in the UK during the 2014 referendum. However, the past few years in the UK have been characterized by increasing centralized nationalism, peaking in the vote to leave the EU and the government of Boris Johnson. With Boris Johnson representing this English nationalism that stands in sharp contrast to Scottish values, peripheral nationalism is now growing in Scotland, potentially leading the UK into a similar cycle as Spain.

Additionally, this concept that I describe of regions claiming that the central government does not recognize regional distinctiveness and that this lack of recognition in turn leads to increased calls for secession is relative and performative based on the current situation of the state as a whole. This idea connects to the topic of the next chapter: economic prosperity. During times of economic hardship for the state as a whole, peripheral nationalism increases based on claims of the exceptionalism of the region while during times of relative economic prosperity for the state as a whole, peripheral nationalism tends to be decreased, creating a more united image around the success of the state. I will continue to explore this idea throughout the next chapter.
Chapter 2: Economic Factors in the Separatist Movements and How a Disparate Identity leads to Differing Economic Contributions

Scholars like Muñoz and Tormos contend that while cultural identity certainly plays a large, if not the largest, role in leading to increased claims of exceptionalism and support for secession in Catalonia and Scotland, cultural identity must interact with other factors to lead to this increased support.¹ With this notion in mind, a region’s economic prosperity also plays an important role in the calls for separation in both regions, however, in different ways and to different extents. Within Spain, Catalonia is one of the state’s richest regions; therefore, many Catalans have become frustrated with having to pay a significant portion of their economic earnings to the central government, which are then used in part to support poorer regions. Catalans, as with their culture, have historically and presently seen their economy as strong and modern while the rest of Spain’s economy is based upon more traditional industries. Ultimately, because the Spanish central government has failed to establish its state as multinational and to recognize the distinctiveness of the Catalans and a Catalan nation, many Catalans, who embrace a separate identity from the rest of Spain both culturally and economically, feel unjustified having to support other regions in a country that does not even acknowledge distinct Catalan contributions. The overall economic instability of Spain in recent times, particularly during the 2008 economic recession, has increased claims that the Spanish central government has ignored Catalan exceptionalism and that being a part of Spain is limiting the region from reaching its full potential. The recent relative economic

hardships of Spain as a whole have also contributed to the rise in right-wing nationalist parties based on the rise in this peripheral nationalism, leading to even more peripheral nationalism and calls for secession in Catalonia.

On the other hand, the Scottish economy is not defined as being more prosperous than other parts of the British economy, as London is the clear economic center of the state, but instead as being distinct from the rest of the British economy, developing its own economy based upon North Sea oil revenue, manufacturing, and the production of uniquely Scottish items such as whiskey. Therefore, in a similar way that Scotland can maintain its own identity within the UK while still maintaining some sense of a British identity, Scots are able to maintain certain economic autonomy and contribute separately to the British economy but can still be a part of and even rely on the overall British economy. Additionally, with the fact that the British economy has, for the most part, remained and been perceived internationally as relatively strong in recent times pre-Brexit, Scottish desires to secede have been minimized. However, just as Brexit has led to damage to the ties between Scottish and British cultural identity, Brexit has already led to changes in the economic relationship between Scotland and the rest of the UK. Ultimately, Scots will be forced to decide whether they will reap more economic benefits remaining in the UK and not the EU or if they would be in a better economic position leaving the UK and being their own state but rejoining the EU and regaining those economic benefits through means such as the trade deals. Brexit has also resulted in a period of economic difficulties for the state, damaging the image of the strong British economy internationally. These economic hardships have increased Scottish nationalism
based on claims that an independent Scotland could handle the economic situation better than as part of the UK, consequently increasing support for secession in the region.

This chapter will explore the economic relationship between each region and its host state and how these economic relationships connect to the relationship between centralized and peripheral identities laid out in Chapter One. By the end of this chapter, I will demonstrate that the combination of the Spanish central government’s increased centralized nationalism that reinforces the idea that Catalonia is not distinct with Spanish reliance on the Catalan economic success leads to Catalan animosity towards the Spanish central government and increased calls to secede. Conversely, Scots maintain a distinct cultural identity and nationality that was more recognized by their host state pre-Brexit without heightened centralized nationalism, and this acknowledgement combined with the direct benefits received from being a part of the British economy has led Scots to vote to remain in the UK. However, just as the growing English nationalism culminating in the UK’s recent departure from the EU has created a fracture between Scottish and English identities, post-Brexit times have also had impacts on the economic relationships between Scotland and the overall UK. With the British economy facing hardship and the Scots no longer able to reap the fiscal benefits of the EU, Scottish economic arguments pre-Brexit that have tended to favor staying in the UK have been altered post-Brexit. This renewed Scottish nationalism post-Brexit during a time of economic hardship for the state demonstrates the performative nature of regional nationalism.

**Defining Catalan and Scottish Economies**

Both regions, as areas with some varying extent of autonomy, have developed distinguishing characteristics of their economies. First, Catalonia has developed an
extremely successful and modernized economy, especially in relation to the rest of the Spanish state. Catalonia represents one of the richest regions in Spain, with a GDP per capita of approximately $37,000 in 2019. A large part of the Spanish economy is based on the industrial sector, particularly in automobiles, chemicals, food, electrical household appliances, and IT equipment. Catalonia has also been a center for scientific research, which sets the region apart as modern and forward-thinking as compared to many other parts of Spain. Additionally, Catalonia’s economy is extremely reliant upon tourism, with large economic contributions from the hospitality and service industries that serve the large number of tourists who visit the region and especially Barcelona, which attracts around 20 million tourists each year. Lastly, Catalonia’s strong economy is based upon its strategic position on the Mediterranean Sea. This prime location has opened up the region to international trade and investment, bringing international businesses into the region. It is clear that economically, Catalonia has been very successful, and this success is something from which, as I will continue to explore, Spain significantly benefits.

Scotland has also developed its own economy and has made specific economic contributions to the United Kingdom. Scotland does have a strong economy, with a GDP

---

4 Ibid.
6 “Catalonia.”
per capita of approximately $45,000 in 2018, higher than all other areas in the UK outside of London and England’s eastern regions. One of the most important parts of the Scottish economy is the region’s wealth of natural resources, especially with regard to oil, gas, and energy, with oil and gas representing 5% of the Scottish GDP and, more generally, energy representing 15-20% of the Scottish GDP. This reliance on natural resources has created wealth for the region; however, because of the volatility of an economy reliant on natural resources, it has also led to some instability for the Scottish economy. Additionally, the production and sale of Scottish whiskey and other Scottish products in addition to forestry in the highlands have also uniquely contributed to the economy of Scotland, which demonstrates how elements that are distinct to Scottish culture as opposed to a more general British culture have also brought economic benefits to the area.

Catalan and Scottish Economies in Relation to Host Country

The main area in which economic factors affect increased support for secession and demonstrate differences in the separatist movements of Catalonia and Scotland is in the economic relation of each region to that of its respective host state. In Chapter One, I established that the British central government has recognized Scottish distinctiveness and a Scottish nation while the Spanish central government refuses to designate Catalonia

---

11 Ibid.
as a nation and instead insists upon a united Spanish identity based on Castilian identity. The same overarching idea about the differences in the relationships between central and peripheral identities is present in the economic relations between the region and the host state. The Spanish central government minimizes the distinct economic contributions of the Catalans but still relies on the Catalan economic success to support the overall Spanish economy. Conversely, the British central government recognizes unique Scottish contributions to the state economy, particularly via natural resources, but Scotland, which is not the state’s economic hub, also significantly benefits from being a part of the British economy. Ultimately, these relationships between the economies of the regions and the host states and how they are connected to the underlying idea of identity will thus be explored through three main aspects: effects of a “one-size-fits-all” policy on the region’s economy, the relative economic strength of the region compared to the host state, and the level of existing economic independence in the region.

First, with regard to a “one-size-fits-all” idea, defined as economic policies created at the level of the central government that are then universally imposed in the same manner throughout the entire state, these policies have had similar effects on both Catalonia and Scotland. With regard to Catalonia, many pro-independence Catalans argue that centralized decision making by the Spanish government has ultimately stifled economic growth in Catalonia and that autonomy would lead to an economic boom for the area, as Catalan individuals are best-suited to make decisions regarding the economy of their own region.\textsuperscript{12} The failure of Spanish public policy to suit Catalan economic

needs is based upon substantial differences between the Catalan and overall Spanish economies. Compared to Spain, Catalonia carries the heavier burden of the industrial, tourism, and export sectors and carries a smaller weight of the public sector, but Spanish policies often fail to take into account these differences.\textsuperscript{13} One area where Spanish public policy has been particularly ill-suited to the economic needs of the Catalan economy is international transportation in Catalonia. Because of Catalonia’s large presence of international investors, trade, and businesses, its airport should be especially strong; however, the central government has control over airport management and has focused the majority of intercontinental and international flights in Madrid instead of in Barcelona.\textsuperscript{14} Therefore, a significant economic argument for independence in Catalonia can be summarized in that the Spanish central government’s one-size-fits-all approach to public policy has prevented Catalonia from reaching its full economic potential, and Catalans should secede in order to manage the decisions that affect their economy to make the area more economically successful. Additionally, these frustrations over one-size-fits-all policies have increased during the Spanish financial crisis of 2008-2014, which led to arguments by pro-independence Catalans that Spanish economic policies were insufficient to handle the crisis for the entirety of the state and that the Catalan government of an independent Catalonia could have better handled the crisis.\textsuperscript{15}

Similar arguments are made among pro-independence supporters in Scotland, with strong arguments that both historically and currently, the public policies imposed across the entirety of the UK do not align with the Scottish economy, specifically

\textsuperscript{13} Cuadras-Morató, “The Economic Debate,” 161-64.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.

regarding Scottish values and aspirations.\textsuperscript{16} The British central government, despite some Scottish fiscal autonomy, still controls central aspects of economic policy, notably retaining the majority of control over fiscal, financial, macroeconomic, and commercial powers,\textsuperscript{17} which therefore gives the British central government the power to impose policies on Scotland that run contrary to Scottish ideas and values. This inadequate constitutional structure is demonstrated through one-size-fits-all economic policies in the UK that focus on cutting the welfare state, similar to the policies imposed under Thatcher, creating high levels of income inequality and running contrary to the Scottish value of egalitarianism.\textsuperscript{18} Similarly, many Scots argue that decisions by the British central government to cut spending in order to reduce economic deficit have negatively impacted both the Scottish and overall British economy, particularly during the recent periods of economic recession in the 2000s, and that in spite of the Scottish push to return the economy to growth through increased spending, the British central government continues to cut spending. Thus, many pro-independence Scots argue that Scotland could and would bounce back more quickly from economic crashes if they could fully control their own economic policy.\textsuperscript{19} This argument demonstrates the overarching idea of performative nationalism and how periods of economic hardship for the state as a whole, as in post-Brexit times, increase peripheral nationalism and can lead to growth in desires to secede.

\textsuperscript{16} Bourne, “Europeanization and Secession,” 160-161.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, 26-28.
While the idea of shortcomings of one-size-fits-all policies for the economies of their respective regions and the subsequent effects on the separatist movements in Catalonia and Scotland are similar, one economic area in which these two regions differ is in their relative economic role and importance in the state and how this placement affects the separatist movements. The most notable difference is that Catalonia is one of the largest contributors to the Spanish economy. Catalonia’s GDP per capita in 2018 was higher than the national average of Spain, which signifies that the average Catalan is wealthier than the average Spaniard and creates another element that many Catalans use in their claims of exceptionalism.\textsuperscript{20} The significant Catalan economic contributions to Spain, which are greatly enjoyed by all Spaniards, combined with the Spanish central government’s failure to recognize and appreciate a Catalan distinctiveness have led to increased Catalan calls for secession. On the other hand, Scotland, dissimilar from Catalonia, is not a main economic center of the UK, as there is little argument that the economic center is London. The GDP of Scotland is seven percent lower than the overall GDP of the UK as compared to the GDP of Catalonia, which is 17 percent higher than the overall GDP of Spain.\textsuperscript{21} These differences in statistics demonstrate that Scotland is not the economic powerhouse that Catalonia is; therefore, the economic arguments for independence are not as strong in Scotland as they are in Catalonia. I claim this idea because the Scottish economic arguments are based on the idea of a different Scottish economy as compared to the rest of the British economy while the Catalan arguments are based on a stronger Catalan economy as compared to the rest of the Spanish economy,

\textsuperscript{20} “Catalonia.”
creating a situation where the advantages for Scotland to remain as a part of the UK appear more obvious.\textsuperscript{22}

As mentioned previously, a large part of the Scottish economy is its abundance of natural resources; therefore, an independent Scotland would unquestionably have an economy that strongly relies on these sources. However, despite periods of strong success in this sector, specifically during the discovery of North Sea oil in the 1970s, this industry is extremely volatile and subject to fluctuations in the global economy; therefore, with this industry being such a large base of an independent Scottish economy, it then has the potential to be quite unstable.\textsuperscript{23} Although some Scots, as previously mentioned, argue that independence would improve Scotland’s ability to bounce back from economic crashes and thus minimize this instability, it is clear that Scotland would face significant difficulties in macro-economic management as an independent state, possibly much more than it does as a part of the UK.\textsuperscript{24} In order for Scotland to be successful as an independent state, it must create a stable economy that can adjust to external forces,\textsuperscript{25} but with such a strong reliance on natural resources, its ability to do so seems improbable. Scotland within the UK can still benefit significantly from the revenues from its rich natural resources; however, it can use the UK for more economic stability and to be more resilient to shock without minimizing the idea of a distinct Scottish economy.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}
Moreover, with regard to Catalonia and Spain, because of its strong economic position in the state, most advocates and even opponents of independence agree that under an independent Catalonia, the actual fiscal gains accruing to individual Catalans would increase.\(^{26}\) Therefore, the economic argument most commonly attached to the pro-independence rhetoric is the idea that Catalonia is “being robbed” by Spain and its central government,\(^{27}\) demonstrated through the popular sentiment “Madrid nos roba” or “Madrid is robbing us.”\(^ {28}\) Presently, Catalonia transfers more than one percent of the Spanish GDP in redistributions to poorer regions and other obligatory payments.\(^ {29}\) Similarly, it contributes approximately 19 percent to the central government’s tax revenue base even though it only receives 14 percent of the Spanish central government’s spending budget in return\(^ {30}\) and is only home to 16% of the Spanish population.\(^ {31}\) Based on all of these facts, pro-independence supporters in Catalonia argue that they are forced to carry a disproportionate weight of the Spanish economy and that they should secede from Spain in order to stop paying heavy taxes to a central government that does not sufficiently support them nor recognize their unique

---


contributions so that the revenue from Catalan expenditures could be directed towards helping Catalonia and individual Catalans.\textsuperscript{32}

One last element that differs among the two regions in terms of how it affects the arguments in favor of secession is the degree of economic autonomy that each region has within the host state. Although both regions have some form of fiscal autonomy, Catalans tend to be less satisfied with their level of autonomy than Scots. The fact that, when compared to the Basque Autonomous Community (Euskadi) in Spain, the Catalans have significantly less economic autonomy best explains this dissatisfaction. Accordingly, the Basque administration has the power to collect its own taxes and organize regional spending in addition to being granted annual funds from the Spanish central government for the share of value added tax (VAT) generated in the Basque Autonomous Community (Euskadi).\textsuperscript{33} Many in Catalonia desire this same level of economic autonomy, most notably more power over taxes. The fact that Spain has granted this form of economic autonomy to the Basques but not to the Catalans serves as a further demonstration that the Spanish central government fails to account for Catalan economic distinctiveness in the same way that they have done historically with the Basques. This failure has not only led to increased calls for more economic autonomy to match that of the Basque Autonomous Community (Euskadi) but now to calls for outright secession.\textsuperscript{34}


\textsuperscript{33} Barón, “Why Public Finance Matters,” 98.

Conversely, although Scotland does not have complete fiscal independence, after increased calls for more Scottish autonomy during the 1980s and 90s, the UK devolved many economic powers to Scotland through the Scotland Act of 1998. While the UK still maintains control over certain economic policies, most notably macroeconomic policies and spending, the act granted Scots a certain degree of economic independence through powers including control over personal income tax, non-domestic rates, local taxes on corporate property, and council taxes.\textsuperscript{35} Despite the fact that there are still major economic powers of which the UK retains control, unlike in the Catalan case, there is no other region in the UK that receives more economic autonomy; therefore, this increased economic independence helped to reduce further calls for secession. Because Scotland retains a certain level of economic autonomy, the region is able to maintain a separate economy that is significantly controlled by Scottish decisions which thereby minimizes the ability of the British central government to completely ignore and override Scottish decisions and desires regarding its economy. This notion is strongly connected to the idea of the British central government’s relative success at portraying a multinational identity where Scotland is able to exist as its own nation with its own economic contributions and policies within the greater British identity and economy; however, relative is a key term due to the previously mentioned frustrations of some Scots over the one-size-fits all macroeconomic policies over which Scots do not have control.

\textbf{Catalan and Scottish Economies in Relation to Europe and the EU}

Similar to the fact that the cultural and identity arguments fueling separatist sentiments in both regions have a connection to Europe, the economic arguments also

\textsuperscript{35} Rioux, “How Autonomous Is Scotland Today?”
have a strong tie to Europe and both regions’ strong associations with a European identity, complicating the center-periphery relationships. As noted in the previous chapters, both Spain and the UK have historically been outsiders within the EU due to their economic positions: Spain as one of the poorer member states upon initially joining the EU in 1986 and in recent times based on high Spanish debt and the UK as one of the richest members from the time it joined in 1973 to the time it exited in 2020. However, despite the status of their host countries as outsiders, Catalans and Scots have both strongly associated with a European identity and have attempted to find their own places separate from their host states in the European economy.

For Catalonia, just as its cultural identity connects to the EU based on ideas of modernity, urbanism, and diversity, Catalans tie their economy to the EU by distinguishing their region as a successful, modern economy compared to the more traditional economy of the establishment Spain. From the very beginning of Spain’s membership within the EU, Catalan business associations have been at the forefront of pro-European Economic Community (EEC) and EU organizations,36 and the desire to be at the forefront of the European economy is still prevalent in Catalonia. Catalonia is an industrial hub of many modern technological advances including automobiles and IT equipment and serves as a center of scientific research37 while the “establishment Spain” is less industrialized and has an economy more strongly based on agriculture and tourism.38 Therefore, as Spain has failed to modernize its economy, Catalans have turned to pro-Europeanism as a current terminological and ideological substitute for the previous

37 “Catalonia.”
calls to transform Spain into a modern state.\textsuperscript{39} Consequently, pro-independence supporters in Catalonia see Europe as the place where its economic future lies, which sits in sharp contrast to what many Catalans see as Spanish economic failures, particularly during periods of recession.\textsuperscript{40} As previously mentioned, because of its strategic location, Catalonia has developed an international economy, with strong international trade and numerous foreign businesses, which is viewed in comparison to Spain’s more isolationist and traditionalist economic policies.\textsuperscript{41} Additionally, Catalonia has a higher GDP per capita as of 2018 than the overall GDP per capita of the EU,\textsuperscript{42} which demonstrates Barcelona’s potential to be a major European city that mirrors other large economies in the EU like Paris.\textsuperscript{43} Because of a feeling among many Catalans of their lack of representation in the idea of a Spanish nation, both in terms of distinct cultural and economic contributions, Catalans increasingly turn to Europe as a model for their modernity.

On the other hand, the extent to which Scotland can really be integrated into the EU has been hampered based on the UK’s lack of integration into the EU in many areas, which most notably is its lack of economic integration through its refusal to adopt the Euro as its currency. Scotland, conversely, does not share in the same sense of economic


\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 104-105.


\textsuperscript{42} “Catalonia”

superiority that the UK and particularly England, does; therefore, this divergence between Scotland and England has represented a major point in Scotland’s claims of exceptionalism. However, despite the limitations on Scotland’s ability to fully integrate into the EU, Scots have always seen Europe as an essential part of their identity and a way to distinguish themselves from the rest of the UK, especially England.\textsuperscript{44} In terms of economic similarities, Scots champion a dedication to egalitarianism and a strong welfare state, which is in strong opposition to the English economic policies of cutting the welfare state in the UK but more in line with the European social model in the EU that emphasizes the creation of strong welfare states within its member states.\textsuperscript{45} These ideas about the ties between the Scottish and EU economy and values as compared to the disconnect between the overall British and EU economic policies and values demonstrate how this overarching idea relates to the British central government’s presentation of the UK as a relatively multinational state that allows Scots to preserve their own identity. Until 2016, Scotland has been able to remain as a part of the UK and still maintain values that align more closely with the European Union, which are particularly reflected in Scottish microeconomic policies.

However, since the UK voted to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum and since Scots had voted to remain in the UK in the 2014 referendum, Scotland will now be forced to leave the EU along with the rest of the state despite the fact that the majority of Scots voted not to leave the EU in the Brexit referendum of 2016 as a stance against the

\textsuperscript{44} Muro and Vlaskamp, “How do Prospect of EU Membership Influence Support for Secession?” 1118.

English nationalism that the Brexit movement represents.\textsuperscript{46} This completely throws off the balance of Scots being able to remain in the UK with Eurosceptic Brits and anti-European economic policies but still keep a Scottish sense of Europhilia and align their own economic policies with the values of the EU. Therefore, as calls for another Scottish independence referendum have resurfaced, Scots will have to rethink the economic arguments for and against separation. A main question when Scots decide whether or not to secede from the UK will become whether Scotland would benefit more economically by remaining in the UK and maintaining shock protections and British resources or whether it will be more economically successful by leaving the UK but joining the EU as an independent state, where it would inherit trade deals and the resources involved with being an EU member state.\textsuperscript{47} The UK has already faced economic difficulties post Brexit, and these difficulties have especially been reflected in the fishing industry of Scotland, with estimates that seafood merchants are losing the equivalent of 1.4 million US dollars per day due to the difficulties of exporting to the EU.\textsuperscript{48} With these post-Brexit economic troubles, it seems like a tempting option for Scots to vote to leave the UK. However, if Scots are able to hold a second independence referendum, vote to leave the UK, and petition for EU membership as an independent state, these changes will lead to many future economic issues for an independent Scotland in the EU, such as the transition period following separation from the UK where Scotland would not yet be able to join the EU, trade negotiations with the UK, since Scotland actually sells more to the


\textsuperscript{48} Ziady and Kent, “Scottish Fishermen Say ‘Brexit Carnage’ Threatens to Kill Their Business.”
UK than it does to the rest of Europe, and the decision of whether or not it would switch from the pound to the Euro.

**Overall Implications of Economy for Separation**

The actual effects of how economic factors by themselves have influenced the way individuals in each region vote in the independence referendums differ significantly between Catalonia and Scotland. In Catalonia, most supporters and even opponents of Catalan secession accept that independence would create a positive fiscal dividend for citizens of Catalonia. Therefore, in line with this idea, the prospect of economic autonomy independently increases support for secession in Catalonia. Conversely, the effects of economic independence on influencing the independence vote are less clear cut in the case of Scotland. Approximately the same percentage of Scots claim that Scotland’s economy would improve if independent from the UK as claim that Scotland’s economy would be worse if independent from the UK. Along with these results, the less optimistic a Scottish individual is about the effect of independence on Scotland’s economy, the less likely he/she is to be inclined to vote for independence and the more optimistic a Scottish individual is that independence would positively impact Scotland’s economy, the more likely he/she is to vote for independence.

---


54 Ibid.
show that, unlike in the Catalan case, the economic influence does not have an independent effect and is instead connected to an individual’s preconceived ideas of how an independent Scotland would look, which demonstrates that how Scots vote with regard to secession is based on a combination of cultural identity and economic factors.

This difference in the effect of economic autonomy by itself in Catalonia and Scotland is ultimately based upon the underlying identity factors. The inarguably strong economy of Catalonia compared to the economy of the rest of Spain helps to enhance a Catalan identity and a Catalan nationalism among individuals in the region that already exists based on a history of the Spanish central government’s insistence on a unitary Spanish nation and subsequent refusal to acknowledge a Catalan nation despite a distinct Catalan culture and economy. Conversely, Scotland does not have this same independently strong economy, and instead, their economy is more tied with that of the United Kingdom. Therefore, the Scottish identity, which is already somewhat reconciled with the British identity due to the British central government’s relative success in portraying its state as a multinational, does not have this same strong economic element that the Catalan identity has among its citizens. Therefore, while the prospect of economic independence and success led to obvious increases in support for independence in Catalonia, the same cannot be said for Scotland. Instead, Scots use the idea of a better Scottish economy either as an independent state or as a part of the UK as justification for voting one way or the other in line with their already existing ideas as to whether their identity is only Scottish or some combination of Scottish and British. However, it is important to note that individuals in both cases viewed the potential for economic success as an independent state as a reason for voting for independence, which demonstrates that
the idea of a unique, successful economy helps to shape the identity of a group of people. Thus, this idea demonstrates that the two factors discussed in the past two chapters, cultural identity and economic prosperity, come together to constitute the claims of exceptionalism in both cases and ultimately lead to increased support for secession.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the economic arguments employed in the Catalan and Scottish movements combine with the ideas of national identity that I presented in Chapter One to demonstrate the main differences between the Catalan and Scottish cases. In the Catalan case, the Spanish central government relies on the specific economic successes of Catalonia while still attributing these successes as overall “Spanish” instead of “Catalan.” This economic situation combined with the Spanish central government ignoring Catalan exceptionalism and the dialectical relationship between the center and periphery has led to increased support for secession in Catalonia. Conversely, Scotland is not the main economic center of the UK but instead provides a distinct economic contribution, largely based on natural resources, while still relying on the overall more stable and diverse British economy. Therefore, pre-Brexit, this economic situation coupled with the fact that a Scottish cultural identity has been able to still exist within the UK without heightened centralized nationalism has led Scots to vote to stay in the UK. Nevertheless, Brexit has led to many economic struggles for the UK as a whole and Scotland by default, which has led Scots to question whether they truly benefit from being a part of the British economy.

However, these conclusions are relative, and because the situation and relationships in these regions and host states are constantly changing, the levels of
support for secession also change along with the reasons as to why individuals support secession. Specifically, during periods of hardship or economic struggles for the host state, as was evident during the European economic recession in the 2000s and currently in a post-Brexit time, more internal divisions arise. These divisions then lead to claims by regions like Catalonia and Scotland that the central government of the host state does not recognize their exceptionalism and regional successes and that the time of hardship could be handled better by the region if given the power as an independent state.

Conversely, in periods of relative prosperity for the host state as a whole, calls for secession tend to be minimized. Therefore, the performative nationalism characteristic of both of these cases remains strongly related to the overall economic situation of the state as a whole at a given moment.
Chapter 3: Sports as a Microcosm for the Catalan and Scottish Separatist Movements

Up to this point, I have looked at the role of a distinct cultural identity and the economic position and relationships of the regions in the separatist movements in Catalonia and Scotland and how these connect to the overarching idea that the British central government more successfully conveys a multinational identity and recognizes Scotland as one of those nations while the Spanish central government stresses one Spanish nation and thus denies recognition of a Catalan nation. However, the individualized sports in Catalonia and Scotland and, more specifically, their soccer teams, relate to both culture and economics. In both regions, cheering for a specified team unites the members of a community, with sporting matches serving as important cultural events. This notion is especially true in Catalonia, with such a great cultural attachment to the region’s largest and most successful soccer team, F.C. Barcelona (Barça).1 Similarly, in Scotland, while there are multiple Scottish soccer and rugby teams, Scots have especially united around their nation’s selection, specifically when the team has qualified for the World Cup, which it did in 1998, making the success of Scottish sports a unique part of their culture and consequent identity.2 Sports also provide significant economic contributions to both the regions and their overall host states, with matches that attract individuals from local communities in addition to tourists.

Furthermore, not only do sports connect to the two previously mentioned aspects but the large role of sports in both regions also connects to the importance of “being European” in the regions’ identities as well. Soccer is a particularly European sport, which therefore greatly connects soccer and European culture and identity. Just as nearly every major city in the US has its own football team, nearly every major European city has a successful soccer team that citizens support to demonstrate their national pride; however, what makes soccer a European sport is the national team for each state that plays the other national teams of the other European states in significant tournaments, such as the European Championship. Additionally, soccer plays a large role in the overall European economy, with studies showing that in 2017-2018, the five biggest European leagues alone generated the equivalent of 17.4 billion US dollars in revenue.3

In addition to the importance of sports in connecting to elements that are essential components of both regions’ claims of exceptionalism and consequent separatist movements, sporting matches throughout history have been a perfect scene for communities to display nationalist sentiments. For example, sporting occasions provide numerous opportunities to demonstrate the language and symbolism of the nation through flags, anthems, parades, cultural performances, etc.4 Therefore, it comes as no surprise that, to some extent, individuals have used large sporting events in both Catalonia and Scotland as places to express their claims of exceptionalism as compared to the host state and champion the pro-independence cause. A prime example of this is the 1976 Copa del


Rey and its name change from the Copa del Generalísimo—a name that referred to Franco—to promote the new Spanish democracy and national identity. However, in this chapter, instead of solely looking at how individuals use sporting events in the regions to advance the pro-independence agenda of individuals in Catalonia and Scotland, I will demonstrate how sports in the two regions actually serve as a microcosm for the center-peripheral relationships and the separatist movements that have followed in the two cases. Specifically, I will show how the two regions’ differences in how their sports leagues, specifically soccer leagues, are organized parallels the idea of the United Kingdom as a relatively multinational state and the Spanish central government’s imposition of a singular, unitary identity. However, as mentioned in previous chapters, the performativity of this idea is essential, with support for secession being increased during times of hardship for the host state and support for secession being decreased during times of prosperity for the entire state. Increased regional nationalism in these two regions during times of success for regional sports and decreased regional nationalism during times of success for the national sports reflects this same idea.

The Layout of the Catalan and Scottish Soccer Leagues

The simple distinct layouts of the sports leagues in the two states, Spain and the UK, parallel the portrayal of the United Kingdom as a more successful multinational state than Spain. First, in the UK, the layout of sports is unique from almost any other country—each region, England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, has its own soccer and rugby leagues. This division in itself strongly demonstrates the UK’s relative success in attempts to portray itself as a state of many nations, providing each region the

---

opportunity to retain its distinct identity within the greater state of the UK in the same way it retains its own sports league. Conversely, Catalonia does not have its own sports leagues nor national team, and instead, Catalans play simply as members of the Spanish League and for the Spanish national team during the World Cup and European Championship. In place of this layout, many Catalan athletes, particularly on F.C. Barcelona, would arguably desire to play among the more powerful—and financially successful—teams in Europe, which would allow them to demonstrate greater legitimacy and a perceived international status, as was proposed through the Super League in 2021.

The placement of F.C. Barcelona in La Liga, the Spanish national soccer league, reflects the idea of a singular Spanish nation with no exception for Catalonia. The simple difference in the layout of the sports leagues in the UK and Spain provides major insight as to how the central government views the region in question and reacts to calls for separation, and how all of these factors affect the ways in which individuals in the two regions champion the secessionist cause.

Cultural Identity Elements of Separatist Movements Reflected in Sports

As discussed in Chapter One, the extent to which the idea of cultural distinctiveness leads to calls for separation relates to the extent to which the distinctiveness of the regional identity is recognized and given legitimacy by the central government of the state. Therefore, whether or not the region in question has its own sports leagues within the general layout of sports in the host state reflects this idea of...
cultural identity presented in Chapter One. As Chapter One analyzed center-periphery relationships in both Catalonia and Scotland and to what extent the central government of the host state has recognized a distinctive identity of the region in question, the history and present layout of soccer in the region reflect the same idea. Ultimately, the way in which the soccer leagues in Spain and the UK represent the state’s past and current willingness to accept the distinct identity of Catalonia and Scotland respectively and somewhat reconcile it with the identity of the host state match the overarching idea of the British central government’s relative ability as opposed to the Spanish central government’s inability to ever present its state as multinational.

With regard to Catalonia, Catalan sports and most notably F.C. Barcelona have served as a direct representation of Catalan frustrations over the Spanish central government’s disregard for their uniqueness and refusal to recognize a Catalan nation. During the peak of neglecting Catalan exceptionalism under the rule of Franco, F.C. Barcelona represented a way for Catalans to preserve their unique identity and rebel against the policies of Franco that repressed their Catalan culture. For example, during Franco’s rule, voting for the president of a football club was banned; however, F.C. Barcelona was still able to find a way to vote on minor affairs in order to maintain a sense of democracy and preserve the notion of Catalan soccer as unique.8 Under Franco’s government, F.C. Barcelona represented the surviving center of Catalan culture and distinctiveness. This unique history underlying the Catalan soccer club F.C. Barcelona shows how sports represent the survival of Catalan culture and distinctiveness despite any policies or attempts by the central government to the contrary. Therefore, sports, in

---

particular F.C. Barcelona, represent the imagined Catalan community that those
supporting secession argue should be its own independent state. F.C. Barcelona also has
historically existed alongside Barcelona’s second-biggest soccer club, R.C.D. Espanyol. According to many pro-independence Catalans, supporters and athletes of R.C.D.
Espanyol are not Catalan and represent the vision of the “Spanish Catalonia” desired by Franco. Therefore, the historic competition between R.C.D Espanyol and F.C.
Barcelona aligns with the two historical ideas of Catalan identity, with the first defining Catalonia as part of the Spanish nation and the second defining Catalonia as its own
distinct nation.

Conversely, Scotland does not have this same historical connection with a
Scottish team that strongly represents a space for Scots to rebel against policies and
attempts to suppress Scottish culture, as Scots have never strongly linked sports to the
nationalist cause. This difference can be explained in the fact that while there is one
Catalan soccer club, F.C. Barcelona, that is very clearly connected to Catalan
nationalism, there are two equally large clubs in Scotland, the Rangers and the Celtics,
which both retain the idea of being unique parts of Scottish culture. This lack of strong
Scottish nationalist sentiments in the history of Scottish sports represents the fact that

9 Whigham, Lopez-Gonzalez, and Ramon, ““Més Que Un Joc?,” 226.
November 1, 2013, sec. Sports, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/01/sports/soccer/the-invisible-team-
barcelonas-little-brother-espanyol.html.
11 Joan Barceló, Peter Clinton, and Carles Samper Seró, “National Identity, Social Institutions and Political
Values. The Case of FC Barcelona and Catalonia from an Intergenerational Comparison,” Soccer & Society
1-2, https://www.academia.edu/6156776/Scotland_and_Catalonia_A_Tale_of_Two_Nations_from_Devolution
to_Independence.
throughout its history, the British central government never fully attempted to impose a unified identity, and, despite some anti-Scottish sentiments, the central government overall has been relatively successful in recognizing the unique cultural identity of Scots. The most significant connection historically between Scottish sports and its separatist movement is that in times when Scotland qualified for the World Cup, thus creating a more unified Scottish national identity through sports, support for secession in turn has tended to be higher, as seen during the 1998 World Cup.¹⁴ However, distinct from Catalonia with F.C. Barcelona, no Scottish sports team has the same significance in serving as a historical representation of regional exceptionalism and frustration with the central government, which demonstrates a clear difference in the sports leagues of Catalonia and Scotland and subsequently reflects a major difference in the two regions’ separatist movements.

Presently, the soccer teams in both Catalonia and Scotland represent the unique cultural distinctiveness felt among many individuals in the region that contribute to the calls for secession. However, the two regions’ ability to feel individually represented in their states’ sports reflects the extent to which the individual cultural identity of the region can coexist with the majority identity without being overshadowed and the legitimacy given to the region by the central government of the host state. In the Catalan case, the placement of Catalan soccer teams in La Liga mirrors the Spanish central government’s insistence on Catalonia as part of the Spanish nation, not its own nation, placing the Catalan team as part of the Spanish national team during competitions like the World Cup and European Championship to convey internationally the idea of one

Spanish nation. However, periods when the Spanish national team has been relatively unsuccessful reflect the reality of the lack of unity in the Spanish national identity at that time. For example, during the time of the transition to democracy after Franco’s death when there were especially strong tensions between the center and periphery as to how to reshape the Spanish democracy, the Spanish team did not reach the quarterfinals of the World Cup. These difficulties faced by the national team mirror how times of political change and unrest lead to difficulties in a state, which then leads to heightened internal divisions and consequently an increased regional nationalism.

Additionally, rivalries between F.C. Barcelona, the team that epitomizes Catalan nationalism, and other Spanish teams represent the tensions between the unitary idea of the Spanish nation championed by the Spanish central government and the Catalan idea of multiple nations within Spain. One of these rivalries is between F.C. Barcelona and Real Madrid, which represents one of the largest matches in Spanish soccer. For many Catalans, this match represents a chance for F.C. Barcelona to prove its individual success as a sports team that can beat that of the establishment, parallel to the idea that many Catalans see the modern culture of Barcelona as rivaling Madrid—the city that represents the majority culture underlying the idea of the Spanish nation. Additionally, the rivalry between F.C. Barcelona and R.C.D. Espanyol represents a fight between centralized, Spanish nationalism and peripheral, Catalan nationalism. Ultimately, the

---

matches between these teams mirror the tense relationship between the center and periphery today and their competing visions of nationalism.

On the other hand, the layout of sports in the UK, which segregates Scottish sports from English, Welsh, and Northern Irish sports, represents the idea that the UK is a multinational state and that Scots can maintain their own unique cultural identity within the UK. The fact that Scotland has internationally recognized sports leagues of its own despite not having full independent statehood demonstrates that Scotland still has recognizable athletic achievements that are distinct from the athletic achievements of the overall UK, in line with the idea that the British central government to a certain extent recognizes the unique Scottish identity and consequent cultural contributions to the overall state. However, while the Scots remain distinct from the rest of the Brits during ordinary soccer and rugby games, they join forces with the other regions of the UK during the Olympics every fourth year, showing that Scottish and British identities can still be reconciled to a certain extent. However, even while playing on Team Great Britain, the idea of Scottish distinctiveness does not disappear, as the Scottish media often highlights the achievements of the Scottish athletes on the team as Scottish despite representing the entire British team. Ultimately, this setup of Scottish sports reflects the structure of the state where the British central government recognizes Scotland’s unique cultural identity, contributions, and status as its own nation but still includes them as a part of the overall British identity and accomplishments.

19 Whigham, “Sports and Secessionism,”
21 Whigham, Lopez-Gonzalez, and Ramon, “‘Més Que Un Joc?,” 223.
**Economic Elements of Separatist Movements Reflected in Sports**

In Chapter Two, I analyzed the role of economic prosperity and relationships in increasing support for separation and how these economic issues look vastly different in Catalonia and Scotland, which aligns with the overall concept of the British central government more successfully conveying to the world and to Scots the idea of the UK as a multinational state while the Spanish central government has failed on this front. Mainly, these economic differences are due to Catalonia’s stronger economic position within the host state and subsequent Catalan individuals’ dissatisfaction with supporting Spaniards in less economically developed regions in addition to greater frustrations with the low level of economic autonomy given to Catalonia. The role of the regional sports teams of Catalonia and Scotland in the overall greater economy and the resources dedicated to sports in the regions reflect these same differences related to economic relationships and prosperity. In addition, the increase in regional nationalism during times of success for regional sports and the decrease in regional nationalism during times of success for national sports mirrors the idea of increased support for secession during times of economic hardship for the host state and decreased support during times of economic prosperity for the host state.

First, with regard to the importance of Catalan soccer for the overall Spanish economy, it is clear that F.C. Barcelona alone brings in significant revenue. In fact, in the 2019-2020 season, F.C. Barcelona contributed the equivalent of over 900 million US dollars in revenue to the Spanish economy, which overtakes the revenue that Real Madrid
brought in by the equivalent of nearly 100 million US dollars.\textsuperscript{22} The importance of Catalan sports to the overall Spanish economy mirrors Catalonia’s place as one of the most economically important regions in Spain. Additionally, not only is F.C. Barcelona the most economically successful soccer team in Spain but also in all of Europe,\textsuperscript{23} which parallels the sentiments of many pro-independence Catalans of Barcelona’s economic potential in the EU. However, with the immense success of sports in Catalonia being such a large contributor to the Spanish GDP, representing 2.7\% of the state’s GDP,\textsuperscript{24} the overall Spanish economy greatly benefits from the economic success of Catalan sports, and the Spanish central government uses these funds to support other regions in Spain instead of the funds supporting Catalan individuals. This frustration mirrors an overall frustration about how the Spanish central government sees the more successful Catalan economy as not a uniquely Catalan contribution but simply Spanish economic success, which therefore angers many Catalans over the fact that the Spanish central government relies on Catalonia fiscally without recognizing Catalan exceptionalism and, subsequently, a Catalan nation.

Conversely, in line with the role of Scotland in the overall British economy as an economically successful region but not the largest contributor to the economy, while Scottish sports certainly bring in funds for the British economy, the funds do not compare to the funds brought in by Catalan sports to Spain. While F.C. Barcelona generates more revenue than any other soccer club in both Spain and Europe, no Scottish soccer club


\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.

even makes the top ten list of revenue-generating clubs, but five soccer clubs in England make the list.\textsuperscript{25} Therefore, unlike in Spain where the financial success of Catalan sports teams independently brings in significant funding that is, in turn, used to support non-Catalans, leading to increased calls for secession, Scottish sports do not bring in the same revenue for the UK.

In addition, unlike the Catalan economy, as previously discussed, the Scottish economy is greatly reliant on natural resources, making the economy overall relatively unstable. Therefore, in line with this fact, as mentioned earlier, when Scots believe that the economy of Scotland would be more successful in an independent state, Scots are more likely to support independence than when they believe that the Scottish economy would be less successful in an independent state.\textsuperscript{26} This same sentiment can be mirrored in the effect of the success of Scottish sports on support for secession. When Scottish sports are more successful, as was seen when Scotland qualified for the World Cup in 1998, an increase in support for secession accompanied this sporting success just as when Scots perceive their economy to be more successful as an independent state, support for secession sees a correlated increase. However, most often, Scottish sports have been less successful overall, and its teams have often not qualified for the World Cup Finals, mirroring the relatively lower support for Scottish secession. This correlation reflects the overall instability of the Scottish economy, demonstrating that a main reason for the limited success of the Scottish independence movement is due to instability and, therefore, subsequent reliance on the UK. Additionally, this idea also mirrors the fact

\textsuperscript{25} Taylor, “FC Barcelona on Track to Be Soccer’s First Billion-Dollar Club.”
that there is an increased support for secession during times of relative economic prosperity for Scots, such as after the discovery of oil in the North Sea in the 1970s, which demonstrates the fact that even a smaller victory for Scots, like the discovery of oil or the qualification for the World Cup, can lead to increased Scottish nationalism.

One final way that sports in Catalonia and Scotland mirror their different economic situations and relationships with their host state is the extent to which the region attracts big-name athletes and large sporting events and how this represents the region’s relative economic position in the state. Catalonia, with one of the world’s most successful soccer clubs, F.C. Barcelona, has no issue attracting some of the biggest-name athletes, paralleling Catalonia’s overall economic success. Additionally, F.C. Barcelona has always been known as a “global club,” with many foreign players constituting the stars of the team, often at the expense of other Catalans, representing the internationally focused economy of Catalonia and the sentiments underlying Catalan nationalism based on the desire to receive international recognition and legitimacy. This internationalization of F.C. Barcelona is compared to Athletic Bilbao in the Basque Autonomous Community (Euskadi), where it has traditionally been a requirement to be “Basque” to be able to play for the team, which reflects the economic autonomy given to the Basques, not the Catalans, and consequently less of a need for the Basques to

demonstrate the legitimacy of their economy globally.\textsuperscript{30} On the other hand, Scottish soccer teams do not tend to attract as many big-name international athletes, as athletes are consistently taken from Scottish soccer teams in order to play for the more successful and well-funded teams in England.\textsuperscript{31} This situation calls into question whether Scotland has the funds and resources to give athletes the same opportunities that they can attain in England or on an overall British team,\textsuperscript{32} mirroring the economic situation of Scotland within the UK where the Scottish economy is not one of the main economic centers of the UK and is instead increasingly reliant on the British economy for stability and resources.

Moreover, bids and successes in hosting the Olympics reflect the difference in the economic positions of the two regions within their respective host states. In 1992, when Spain hosted the Olympics, it was held in Barcelona instead of Madrid or any other Spanish city, signifying internationally Barcelona’s place as a modern European city.\textsuperscript{33} Surprisingly, these Olympics signaled a moment of national unity for Spain and Catalonia and subsequently boosted the international image of both the region and entire state internationally, which represented relative prosperity for the state and temporarily decreased peripheral nationalism. Still, Catalonia’s success in hosting such a large sporting event over any other city in Spain parallels the theme underlying economic arguments for secession in Catalonia. Catalonia’s modern economy, which the Spanish central government tends to claim as not uniquely Catalan but simply Spanish, exists in comparison to the image of Spain as a more traditional economy, and makes Barcelona

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{30} Nili, “The Rule of the Game,” 261-267.
  \item \textsuperscript{31} Whigham, “Sports and Secessionism,” 47.
  \item \textsuperscript{32} Whigham, Lopez-Gonzalez, and Ramon, “‘Més Que Un Joc?,” 229.
  \item \textsuperscript{33} Carles Santacana, “Sports, Society and Collective Identity in Contemporary Catalonia,” Catalan Historical Review, no. 7 (2014): 68, \url{https://doi.org/10.2436/20.1000.01.98}.
\end{itemize}
appear more Europeanized than the rest of Spain.\textsuperscript{34} This idea of Barcelona as an economic and modern city of the EU was also echoed in 1936 when Barcelona was selected to hold the Olimpiada Popular that stood in contrast to the Hitler’s Olympics in undemocratic and fascist Germany.\textsuperscript{35} Conversely, when the Olympics have been hosted in the United Kingdom, they have been in England, not Scotland, which represents that England and more specifically, London, is the economic center of the United Kingdom as opposed to any Scottish city. Additionally, Scottish athletes during the Olympics arguably benefit from being a part of Team Great Britain; while the Scottish athletes contribute in meaningful ways to the team, they gain access to more funds and resources as a part of the British team.\textsuperscript{36} This concept mirrors the economic benefits that Scotland gains from being a part of the UK. Just as Scottish athletes contribute to the Olympic team, Scots contribute to the overall British economy, but they also reap significant benefits from being a part of the larger British economy, just as the Scottish athletes benefit from the British Olympic team. However, the Olympics being hosted in the state, whether or not it is in the region desiring secession, represents a moment of prosperity for state sports and leads to economic gains for the country as a whole, which mirrors the idea that connections between the centralized and peripheral identities can lead to some moments of reconciliation between the region and state and at least temporarily decrease the desire to secede.

\textsuperscript{34} D. Gareth Walters, “Introduction,” in Catalan Culture: Experimentation, Creative Imagination and the Relationship with Spain, Iberian and Latin American Studies (Cardiff, UK: University of Wales Press, 2018), 2.


\textsuperscript{36} Whigham, “Sports and Secessionism,” 47.
Conclusion

In all, not only have sports played a role in the promotion of peripheral nationalism in Catalonia and Scotland but they also serve as a microcosm for the center-periphery relationships and the resulting separatist movements both in terms of the identity and economic factors that affect the movements. Scotland is given its own soccer and rugby leagues within the UK, mirroring the recognition of a distinct Scottish nationality, but Scottish sports do not bring in the same economic revenue for the state as do English sports, the biggest name athletes tend to play for England, and sporting events, like the Olympics, are consistently held in England. This reflects the concept that Scotland makes its own contributions to the state but benefits from being a part of a more well-off and internationally recognized larger state. On the other hand, unlike Scotland, Catalonia is not given its own sports leagues within the state, which reflects the view of the Spanish central government that Catalonia is not a nation but instead a part of the Spanish nation. Additionally, the success of F.C. Barcelona in generating the most wealth of all soccer clubs in Europe and attracting international athletes, like Messi, and sporting events, like the Olympics, mirrors the economic achievements of Catalonia, which are successes that the Spanish state accepts as Spanish, not Catalan. These center-periphery relationships in the two cases are also complicated by an additional relationship: Europe. Both regions desire recognition and legitimacy in the EU, as demonstrated through the importance of events like the EuroCup in both places; however, the extent to which these regions can achieve this are minimized as a part of a host state that has been a traditional outsider in the EU.
However, as I have conveyed throughout this thesis, the center-periphery relationships and even the relationships with Europe in the two cases are constantly changing and being renegotiated based on the overall situation of the host state and region in comparison. When the host state is facing hardship, there is an accompanying increase in peripheral nationalism while when the host state is more prosperous, the peripheral nationalism tends to decrease. Similarly, as reflected in sports, when regional sports are more successful, such as when Scotland qualified for the World Cup in 1998 or when F.C. Barcelona is considered to be the most prosperous soccer club in the EU, there is an accompanying increase in regional nationalism. When national sports are more successful, such as when both host states have hosted the Olympics, and the image of the country is improved globally, regional nationalism tends to decrease.

One example of a change that forces a renegotiation of the relationships I discuss above is Brexit, which has forced Scots to reevaluate their relationships with both the UK and the EU. While the present layout of the sports leagues in the UK has been strongly representative of a possible reconciliation of Scottish and British identities, this may no longer be the case with the UK voting to leave the EU. As previously mentioned, arguably soccer, the major sport in Scotland and the rest of the UK, is strongly associated with being a European sport and, similarly, Scots see being European as an essential part of their distinct identity, which mirrors the importance of their independent sports leagues. Before Brexit, the layout of sports leagues in the UK represented the state’s success in allowing the Scottish to maintain a separate identity via a distinct Scottish nation. However, the British vote to leave the EU forces Scots to renegotiate their relationships, as Scots can no longer choose to be Scottish, British, and European.
Therefore, whether the same sense of union during major sporting events such as the Olympics can be felt by the Scots is questionable.
Discussion and Concluding Remarks

In all, these two separatist movements are ultimately connected to negotiating and renegotiating relationships between these regions in the periphery, the centralized state, and, after the late 20th century, the broader institution, the European Union. Based on my research, my main conclusion is that the differing center-periphery relationships between the Catalan and Scottish cases can be largely attributed to the fact that the British central government has been relatively more successful than the Spanish central government in conveying a multinational identity that gives legitimacy to the region by recognizing it as its own nation with a distinct culture and economy. The word relatively here is of the utmost importance, as the relationships between the regions and host states are constantly changing, leading to changes in the level of support for secession and in the reasons why individuals support secession. However, the overall pattern is that before Brexit, the British central government had, to a greater extent than the Spanish central government, recognized a distinct Scottish nation and its specific contributions to the state. This idea combines with the economic relationship between Scotland and the rest of the UK, where the Scottish economy distinctly contributes to the overall British economy but is still reliant on the overall more diverse British economy, leading Scots to vote to stay in the UK. Therefore, pre-Brexit, Scottish and British identities appeared to be reconcilable. This situation in Scotland is represented in Scottish sports culturally via the fact that Scotland is given its own sports leagues within the UK and economically via the fact that Scottish sports do not bring in the same economic revenue for the state that English sports do and that England, not Scotland, constantly attracts the internationally recognized athletes and sporting events. On the other hand, the Spanish central
government’s refusal to incorporate Catalan distinctiveness into the Spanish identity and recognize a Catalan nation combined with the reliance of the state on the successful economy of Catalonia has led to the growth in desires to secede in the Catalan case. This has created a cycle where increased centralized nationalism has led to increased peripheral nationalism, which has then led to further centralized nationalism, resulting in the current situation where Catalan and Spanish identities appear to be irreconcilable. This same idea is reflected in sports culturally via the fact that Catalan sports are grouped into an overall Spanish league and economically via the revenue generated by Catalan sports and the ability of Catalonia to attract big-name athletes and sporting events.

Additionally, the idea of Europe and the creation of the EU significantly complicated the center-periphery relationships in the two cases, as both regions see fitting in with the idea of European culture and being a part of the European economy as essential. Therefore, when the host state is perceived as not fitting in with the definition of Europe, as demonstrated through Spanish traditionalism and English Euroscepticism that culminated in Brexit, both Catalans and Scots have sought to renegotiate relationships with the centralized state to better fit in with the idea of being European. The situation of the UK leaving the EU is a prime example of Scots being forced to renegotiate the center-periphery relationship. While pre-Brexit, Scotland could be Scottish, British, and European, this three-tiered identity is no longer plausible post-Brexit; therefore, the successful negotiation of a center-periphery relationship leading to the reconcilability of these identities may no longer apply. Thus, the Scottish case may begin to look more like the Catalan case where a dialectical relationship exists between the center and the periphery, creating a cycle where increased centralized nationalism, as
demonstrated by Brexit, leads to increased peripheral nationalism, as demonstrated by increased Scottish calls for secession, that is coupled with further centralized nationalism, as seen in Boris Johnson’s reluctance to permit a second Scottish independence referendum and so forth.

Finally, the overarching idea presented in this thesis as the reason for the differences in the results between the two cases—the idea that the British central government has been more successful pre-Brexit at portraying the UK as a multinational state that recognizes regional distinctiveness while the Spanish central government has been less successful—is performative and constantly changing based on the situation of the host states and regions. During times of hardship for the host-state, peripheral nationalism tends to increase, leading to increased support for regional secession, yet during times of relative prosperity for the entire state, peripheral nationalism tends to decrease, leading to decreased support for regional secession. This correlation is demonstrated with the growth in secessionist desires in Catalonia during the 2008 financial crisis and more recently with Scottish resurgence of support for secession post-Brexit now that the British economy is facing challenges. Conversely, during times when the host state as a whole was more prosperous, particularly during the 90s and early 2000s, calls for secession have been lower. The same idea is mirrored in sports: when regional sports appear to be successful, such as when Scotland qualified for the World Cup or with the current economic success of FC Barcelona, regional nationalism is heightened and consequently, there are increased calls for secession while when the overall state sports are more successful, such as when the Olympics were hosted in both states, regional nationalism is less prevalent and calls for secession seem to be at least
temporarily decreased. Therefore, relationships between the regions and host states are always changing based on the surrounding political and economic situations, which demonstrates that no one concept can fully cause the increase in peripheral nationalism and consequent support for secession or explain the exact reasons for the differences between the two movements.

With the main distinctions between the Catalan and Scottish separatist movements and the idea of a potential new future for the Scottish independence movement through growing support for a second referendum post-Brexit, two final questions remain: what are the futures of these two movements, and what do their resolutions mean for the overall future of the European Union? First, post-Brexit, it is entirely likely that the majority of Scots could choose to favor separation and, if a second referendum is allowed, vote to secede from the UK. If this referendum does occur, Catalans will likely use the compliance of the British central government to put pressure on the Spanish central government to act in a similarly democratic manner and allow them to have a legal referendum in Catalonia. Additionally, with the current spread of populism across Europe, it is entirely possible that other movements could arise based on populist sentiments against the established central governments of other communities, forming their own ideas of imagined communities and consequently desiring separation from their host states. However, no matter what happens, the longevity of these two movements in itself demonstrates that this issue of communities’ desires to secede from their host states will not disappear any time soon, which causes many issues for the EU: an organization that relies strongly on the idea of nation-states for its membership. Therefore, in the future, the EU might be forced to rethink the way that it classifies its members and to
change the format of its membership to reflect the emergence of the “imagined communities” that do not exist within their own physical borders, like Catalonia and Scotland. Today, it is evident that more nations than the defined states exist, which therefore suggests that the socially created concept of nation-states is growing antiquated. Based on growing separatist desires by groups that feel out of place in a state that has attempted to establish itself as a nation-state, whether these nation-states will continue to exist in the same sense as they do today in both the EU and the world is questionable as groups increasingly come to reject the nation-state organizational model.
Bibliography


