

Johan Galtung: SPAIN: ONE STATE, TWO, OR 5 IN-BETWEENS?

Alfaz: Two ideas: España Una Grande Libre-Spain: One Great Free-status quo-and España Una Comunidad de Naciones-Spain: a Community of Nations.

And one fact: the forces in Catalunya in favor of independence.

A vast gap. And a dangerous one: when status quo is maintained, and-or independence obtained, by violence, relations can remain bad for a long time. The Iberian peninsula history provides enough examples.

Both sides in the present controversy have important arguments.

A separate inner identity in terms of language, shared history and geographical attachment calls for separate outer identity as statehood, independence, for one. And this concerns not only you but all of Spain, a democracy, and the majority favors status quo, for the other.

Both arguments, and there are more, have a solid ring of truth.

However, these are extreme stands on a scale with many in-betweens not heard in the Spanish debate. Both parties fear entering in-between discourses lest they are seen as weakening their strong stands. There is also a general Spanish tendency toward extremism (1492; Civil War).

Two words invite broader discourses: autonomy and community.

"Autonomy" indicates a softer separate identity than independence. And "community" indicates a softer togetherness than the unitary state.

Enters "Spain as a construction of Castilla" (Ortega y Gasset) with Castilla inland and Madrid innermost, and a periphery of Catalans, Basques, Gallegos, Baleares, Canaries, the coast and the islands.

The Catalans are not alone. However, that may strengthen both extremisms: "if we do not stop independentism now Spain will unravel", "Madrid's problem, not ours, the whole construction is wrong".

Here are five options between one unitary state and two states: decentralization
federation balance confederation association

Before spelling them out an important point: these in-betweens do not exclude each other. We can pick one idea here, one idea there.

[1]"Decentralization" means exactly that: some tasks are delegated to the periphery; like from London to Belfast for Northern Ireland, Cardiff for Wales, Edinburgh for Scotland; with all-over power in the hands of London for a "United" Kingdom. There is no entity "London with surroundings". "London" has actually two tasks, itself, and UK.

The Spanish 17 "autonomías" avoids that problem by filling the whole territory; but the all-over power rests with Madrid.

[2]"Federation" goes one step further, filling the whole territory with autonomous parts and on top of that a center where the parts enter symmetrically for financial matters like central bank-currency, foreign and security policies and basic communication-transportation-IT.

[3]"Balance" goes still a step further by giving power to more levels, not only state and nations, but local municipalities (8,122) and individuals, by voting on issues, unpacking the massive party programs. The levels should be attuned to each other--a Swiss formula.
[4]"Confederation" takes the step to independent states--2, 6?-- with UN memberships and

separate finance-foreign-security-logistic policies, but coordinating with each other as most favored cooperation partners. Like the EU, even if it also tries to move towards more federation.

[5]"Association" stands for positive, friendly, peaceful relations, but no longer as the most favored partners, only as "favored".

Beyond that stands dissociation, independence, even if not violent but as negative peace; no war, no exploitation. Among Iberian nations with millennia also of positive peace. Untenable, unsustainable.

And on the other side a cauldron of discontent with imposed Castilian identities and real or imagined exploitation. Unsustainable.

That is "una-grande-libre". But where is "comunidad-de-naciones"?

Not [1] and [5] above, [1] is too top-heavy, and [5] too loose. The combination [2]+[3]+[4] stands for community; we opt for that one. Below is an effort to spell it out, picking something from all three.

A move towards more federation, balancing state power with nation power, is needed; decentralization for Catalunya alone runs against norms of justice in the sense of equality for the law, and a community. Any special deal for Catalunya will stimulate pressure from the others. Autonomia borders could be redrawn to coincide with nation borders, or autonomias could be grouped together (like the cantons in Switzerland).

Does national autonomy include monarchy vs republic? Why not? Catalunya may be ahead of the rest; after all, monarchy is a dying institution anyhow, used in Spain for political convenience.

Balance between levels: national autonomy in Spain as a community of nations is incompatible with Castilian dominance at the state level and in public space, as witnessed by local writings all over enforcing bilingualism. The right to talk one's own language in parliament and be understood is inalienable; with interpretation to and from Basque. And with more autonomy for the local level, and more referenda.

The confederation enters as a right for nations--sub-states--to have different but compatible foreign policies. One formula might be state level representative UN delegations and embassies, and nation level consulates. The Catalans and the Basques have special relations to France across the Pyrenees; the Gallegos to Portugal; the Balears to other islands in Western Mediterranean; the Canaries to Africa. This would create a stronger Spain, serving as a focus of integration.

Moreover, respect, equality, and autonomy for nations to decide over themselves, like in federations; to let their voices be heard in their own tongues; to spin webs of relations to other nations inside and outside, in a community of nations, is in the spirit of our times.

Imposing dominant nations on others in a state pretending unity is not. Nor is hereditary power. Nor is "independence" in an ever more connecting, globalizing world. They are abstractions from the past.

The proposals are also predictions. Sooner or later coming true.