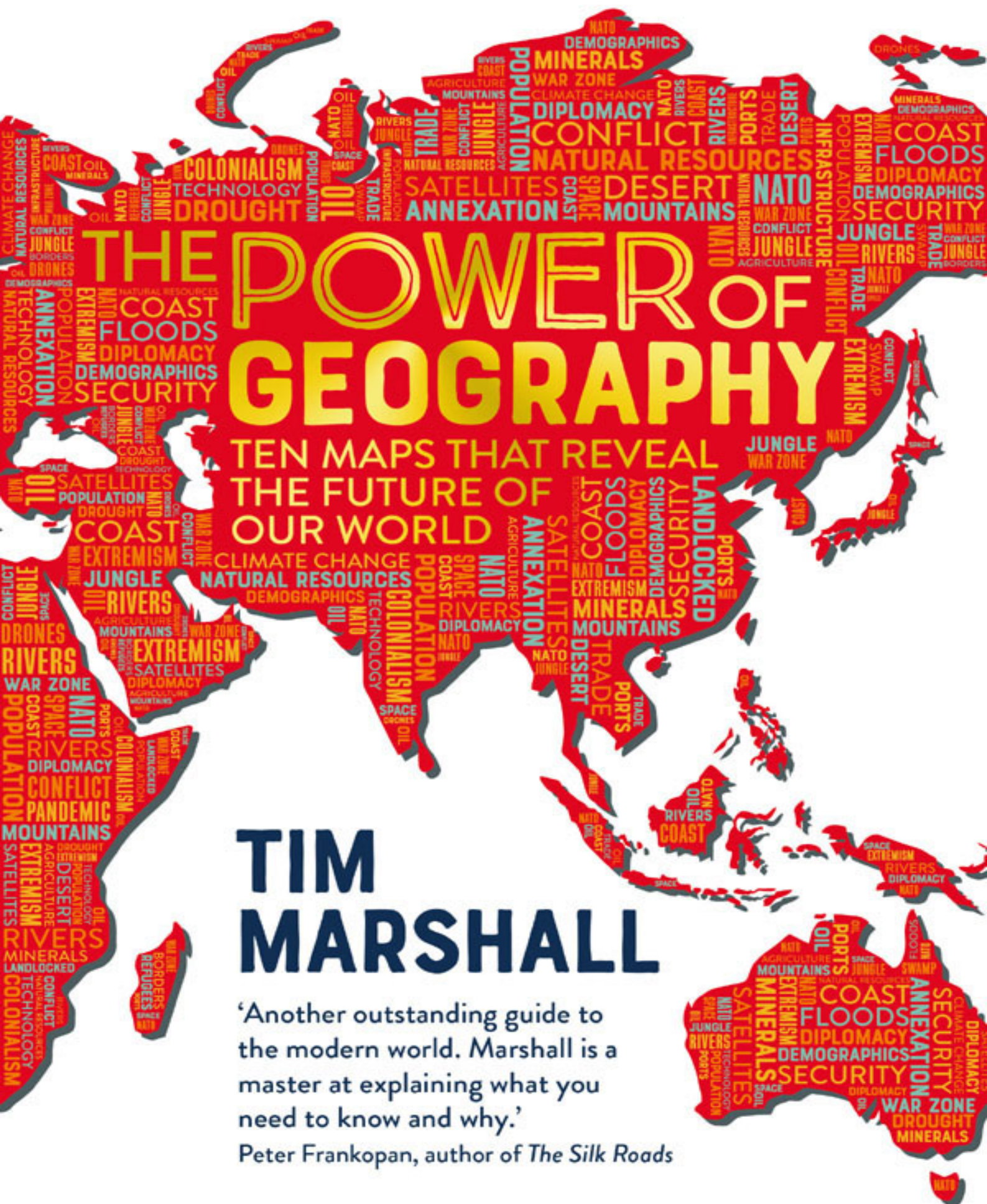


THE SEQUEL TO THE BESTSELLING PRISONERS OF GEOGRAPHY



THE POWER OF GEOGRAPHY

TEN MAPS THAT REVEAL
THE FUTURE OF
OUR WORLD

**TIM
MARSHALL**

‘Another outstanding guide to the modern world. Marshall is a master at explaining what you need to know and why.’

Peter Frankopan, author of *The Silk Roads*

CHAPTER 9

SPAIN

'Nature and man are opposed in Spain.'
Gertrude Stein



ONE OF THE MANY JOYS OF DRIVING ALONG THE SMALL, DUSTY, winding roads in the mountains of Spain is to round a corner and find yourself heading towards a huge fortress sitting majestically atop a seemingly unassailable mass of rock. Some are crumbling ruins, some beautifully preserved; all are keys to understanding the geography and history of Spain.

In early medieval times these magnificent structures were the defining feature of a large area of the Meseta – the extensive plains of central Spain – to the extent that the region’s name is derived from the Spanish word for castle, *castillo* – Castile, ‘Land of the Castles’.

It’s an apt name for the whole country. Spain is a vast fortress. From the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, narrow coastal plains quickly bump up against great walls of mountains and the entire central region is a plateau with its own high ranges and deep valleys. The Meseta makes Spain one of the most mountainous countries of Europe.

At the heart of the Meseta is Madrid. The city was chosen as the capital in the sixteenth century precisely because it is in the middle of Spain; theoretically this meant it could exert a more centralized control over the country, with less distance between it and potential rival centres of power. However, Spain’s mountainous terrain and size (it’s twice as big as the UK) have always hampered trade links and strong political control, and ensured that the different regions retain strong cultural and linguistic identities. Such are the complexities and passions of these differences that the Spanish national anthem does not have lyrics as no one can agree on what they should be. These differences remain – in the north to the extent that in modern times there has been a campaign of terror in the Basque Country by extremists willing to use violence to break free from Madrid, and a political movement in Catalonia to achieve the same aim. Outright domination and

repression from Madrid are things of the past, but the spectre of violent regional nationalism remains.

In Europe we often think that our nations, and national identities, are fixed, partly because the idea of the nation state in its modern form grew up in Europe. We also think that liberal democracy is the norm. However, if we look back at history and across the globe, it is far from normal, and identification with state is a fragile concept in countries with several nations, or peoples, inside their boundaries. Spain may be one of the oldest European states – it began to come together in the 1500s – but it has always struggled to get its regions to coalesce around the centre. Spain is an enthusiastic member of the EU, but the very fact of the Union dilutes the strength of the existing nation states and encourages regional separatism, as seen in Catalonia, where nationalists envisage a future outside Spain but inside the EU. Spain is also a young democracy. The foundations of that democracy appear solid, and there are few threats to it on the horizon, but there is also a long anti-democratic strain in the country which, given the right conditions, could make a comeback. All of these issues are grounded in the country's geography and history.



The regions of Spain have always maintained strong identities, particularly Catalonia, Basque Country and Galicia.

The Kingdom of Spain has a lower population density than most West European countries. With the exception of Madrid, most major cities are along the coastlines, for example Barcelona, Valencia and Bilbao; and the interior, especially the Meseta, is sometimes called ‘La España vaciada’ (‘emptied Spain’) due to the migration from rural areas to the towns and cities which gathered pace through the twentieth century. The population figures have risen and fallen over the centuries – testament to an explosive and violent history. It now stands at about 47 million but projections suggest it will shrink by about 5 million over the next four decades.

Spain is the fourth-largest country on the continent of Europe behind Russia, Ukraine and France, with which it shares a border. Its other borders are with Gibraltar, Andorra and Portugal, the latter being the longest uninterrupted frontier in the EU. But Spain has

another, less-known border – with Morocco. This is due to its coastal enclaves, Ceuta and Melilla. From the Spanish mainland Ceuta can be seen on the North African coastline just 13 kilometres away across the Strait of Gibraltar. In the Mediterranean are the Balearic Islands – all 151 of them. They form Europe's largest archipelago but only five are inhabited: Majorca, Menorca, Ibiza, Formentera and Cabrera. Way south are the Canaries, just 110 kilometres off the coast of north-west Africa but 1,600 kilometres of Atlantic Ocean from the mainland. There are eight main islands, the best-known of which include Tenerife and Gran Canaria.

All this combines to give Spain a defensive military advantage, potential control of access into and out of the Mediterranean, and ports and bases with which to maintain military and trade links and which helped to build one of the strongest militaries in Europe, and then an empire. Nevertheless, even at the height of Spain's powers, its internal geography limited its wealth creation and political unity.

The Pyrenees act as a barrier for an invader, but they have also been an obstacle to the flow of trade. The narrow coastal plains, close to the mountain range, have limited space for agricultural development, although Spain has done well with what it has and is famous for its olives, oranges and wine. The plains on the Meseta produce huge quantities of food, but here again the mountains have hindered the ability to move it around the country and to the ports.

Unlike France and Germany, Spain does not have large rivers which flow uninterrupted along vast plains. Most are short and carry only small volumes of water, and some run dry in the summer months. In recent years droughts have been so severe that crops withered and whole regions were subjected to water-rationing. Spaniards have a dark joke about such times: 'Now the

trees chase the dogs', such is their desperation to be watered.

Of the five main rivers, four empty into the Atlantic, with only the Ebro flowing into the Mediterranean. Most become unnavigable a short way inland, making them useless for moving goods or, during invasions, troops. The Rio Guadalquivir is the only navigable inland river. This means that Seville is the country's only inland river port capable of accommodating ocean-going ships, which is why, on occasions, Seville has been Spain's biggest city. It also why the Moors, who arrived in the eighth century, established a caliphate and stayed for 800 years, were able to set up their seat of power as far north as Córdoba. Limited though they are, the rivers are vital for irrigation of the agricultural regions, and in modern times are a source of hydroelectric power. But Spain is generally a dry country, to the extent that there is the threat of desertification. The mountain ranges in the south run across the peninsula east to west and act as a giant barrier to the moist Atlantic air. Galicia and the Cantabrian Mountains reap the benefit, but this leaves the Meseta plains with little rainfall, thus putting pressure on resources. On the Mediterranean coast excessive pumping of groundwater around porous rock areas has allowed seawater to encroach and salinate the land. This leads to sometimes fractious negotiations about resources between the regions. Many countries have disputes with neighbours over water allocation; Spain's are internal.

The difficulties in moving goods and people, due to the mountains and rivers, are among the factors which held back the creation of a strong, centralized state and maintained regional identities and languages. Madrid has attempted to overcome these geographical barriers via rail and road. The first train line was built in 1848, linking the 29 kilometres between the port towns of Barcelona and Mataró. After that, most lines began in

Madrid and radiated out in a spoke system. The modern road system was only joined up properly in the second half of the last century; the first short stretch of motorway opened in 1969, again linking Barcelona and Mataró. But while national governments have been determined to create 'the Spanish', the Catalans, Basques, Galicians and others have been determined to remain what they were – and geography has helped to separate them. The Despeñaperros, for example, a stunning, sheer-walled river gorge, is the only major natural route through the 485-kilometre-long Sierra Morena mountains separating Andalusia from the Meseta.

Spain's position at the far south-west of Europe meant that from antiquity it was peopled from both Europe and North Africa, including the Carthaginians and Romans. 'Hispania' was part of the Roman Empire for 600 years. Despite only building a handful of settlements for Roman civilians, the Romans left a lasting impression on the country's architecture, religion and language, laying the broad foundations of an Iberian-peninsula-wide culture. Latin crumbled, but from it emerged Castilian, Catalan, Galician and Portuguese.

And here come the Visigoths! By contrast with the Romans, the Germanic invaders from the north who took their place left little of themselves behind, despite being part of Spanish history for several centuries. In 710 the Visigoth King Witiza died and Hispania was split between rival claimants. This is usually a recipe for disaster, especially if one side invites a foreign army to invade. A house divided cannot stand, and the Visigoths' house was so weakened that the roof fell in almost overnight. The facts are opaque, but it appears that Witiza's family appealed to Muslim armies in North Africa to help defeat their rival, King Roderick. The

response appears to have been ‘Nice country – we’ll take it.’

In May 711, Tariq ibn Ziyad landed at Gibraltar with an army of 7,000 men, and by mid July had routed Roderick’s forces and taken the opportunity to kill him. From there Ziyad headed north and occupied the capital, Toledo. An 18,000-strong army arrived as reinforcements and within a couple of years the Muslims controlled a majority of the peninsula which they called ‘Al-Andalus’.

They made repeated raids north of the Pyrenees, but then came the Battle of Tours, which many historians believe preserved Christianity in Europe. In 732 a huge army advancing north to the Loire River was met by the Frankish leader Charles Martel and, against the odds, the Franks triumphed. Martel believed the Muslims had to be kept in Iberia or Christian Europe would fall. A thousand years later the great British historian Edward Gibbon agreed: ‘The Rhine is not more impassable than the Nile or Euphrates, and the Arabian fleet might have sailed without a naval combat into the mouth of the Thames.’

Had Martel failed, there would have been no Charlemagne (Martel’s grandson). He established a buffer zone south of the Pyrenees in part of what is now Catalonia, and the region became the east flank of what would grow to become the *Reconquista* (reconquest) of Iberia. After Tours the Muslims eventually fell back, and from 756 to 1031 settled for the establishment of the Andalusian Umayyad dynasty consisting of about two-thirds of Iberia.

The capital, Córdoba, was probably unrivalled anywhere in the world for its civilization. Libraries were set up, literature, science and architecture flourished, and Muslim scholars brought knowledge and a reawakening of culture to Western Europe. Arabic in particular left its mark on Spain: more Spanish words

are taken from Arabic than any other language apart from Latin. The very name Gibraltar comes from Tariq ibn Ziyad: the rock became known as ‘Jabal Tariq’ (‘Tariq mountain’).

When the caliphate collapsed in 1031 it shattered into mini-kingdoms. The Christian authorities saw their chance to liberate once-Christian lands from Islamic rule, and in the 1060s Pope Alexander II offered forgiveness of sin to any warriors prepared to join the fight. By 1085 Toledo, the key to the Meseta central region, had been retaken – a key moment both in terms of the military outcome and how Spain and Europe would develop.

In 1212 Christian forces broke through the Despeñaperros Pass and by 1250 almost all of Iberia was back under Christian rule, the exception being the kingdom of Granada on the southern coastline. Granada, seeing which way the tide was flowing, had chosen to pay tribute to Castile, and managed to endure for almost another 250 years – time enough to build many of the palaces of the magnificent Alhambra.

It’s easy to think of the *Reconquista* as a unified project, but because of Spain’s geography the northern Christian kingdoms often acted unilaterally. In the north-east, Aragon might be conducting an offensive aimed at gaining a particular piece of territory, while in the north-west Galicia could be in a period of regrouping and planning its next campaign. The reconquest went south in strips, not as a wave, which meant that as modern Spain began to be pieced together, it remained in pieces.

Fast-forward to 1469 and we see the beginning of the end of the Muslim presence. Isabella I of Castile married Ferdinand of Aragon, and the crowns of Aragon and Castile were unified. In geographical terms that meant the north-east and west of Spain were united. It was a limited political union with few economic effects,

and there were still autonomous regions, but it was a key part of the birth pangs of modern Spain. A great leap forward followed within two decades.

In 1482 the royal couple, known as the Catholic Monarchs, launched a decade-long wave of attacks on Granada. In 1492 the emirate surrendered, Granada was incorporated into Castile, and 800 years of Muslim rule in Iberia came to an end. The Muslims had blazed a trail across the land and shone very brightly. By the standards of the time their brutality was no worse than that of others; they advanced knowledge, and for the most part oversaw a period of relative religious freedom. Christians and Jews lived under restrictions, had to pay the non-Muslim 'jizya' tax, wear badges denoting their faith and suffer a host of other indignities, but they were not forced to convert or die, nor live in ghettos.

Isabella and Ferdinand, on the other hand, had already taken over the Spanish Inquisition from the Church in a bid to unite Spain under one religion. With the *Reconquista* complete, Muslims and Jews were given a choice: convert, be exiled or die.

The Jews had been on the peninsula for over 1,000 years, but in March 1492 they were given four months to leave and forbidden to take gold, money, horses or arms with them. Historians differ over the numbers expelled, but 40,000 is a modern estimate. Spain has never had a significant Jewish population since. The expulsion was only officially renounced in 1968.

In 1502 attention turned to the Muslims. There were many conversions, among them some who continued to practise Islam in secret. The converted became known as 'Little Moors', endured suspicion about an 'enemy within' and in 1609 were expelled. Several hundred thousand were forced out; the kingdom of Valencia lost a third of its inhabitants, leaving its agricultural sector in ruins for a generation.

Alas, polls suggest that the depths of Spain's anti-Semitic roots mean they have been difficult to pull out of its culture. This is reflected in a handful of words still used by Spaniards, often without realizing how offensive they are; for example *judiada* means a dirty trick or cruel act, and in the city of León a drink called *matar judíos* – 'kill Jews' – is still consumed during Holy Week. It took until 2014 for the village of Castrillo Matajudíos ('Camp Kill Jews') to change its name. A few years ago, I was about to go on assignment to Israel. The woman in the flat above me, a warm, smiling, stout sixty-something from northern Spain, was concerned enough about my well-being to drag me to one side and hiss: 'Tim. Be careful of the Jews!'

It's true that many European countries are re-examining their vocabularies in the light of modern sensibilities, but Spain seems to have more offensive terms than most. In the province of Extremadura lies the village of Valle de Matamoros, or Kill the Moors Valley, and Matamoros is also a surname in Spain, albeit a relatively rare one. For centuries, through the Inquisition all the way up to the end of the Franco era, one of the ways in which Spain sought to define itself as a unified country was as being innately Catholic, indeed a defender of the faith. Minorities such as Jews and Muslims were always useful as examples of the 'other'.

Spain's monarchs believed they had a religious duty to convert as many people as possible, not just within Spain but also beyond. Sailing into this scenario was a forty-year-old Italian adventurer named Christopher Columbus who'd been badgering them for years to fund an expedition to find a quicker sea route to the Indies. They came up with enough money for him to get to Hispaniola (Haiti/Dominican Republic) and find a small amount of gold which in a letter to Isabella he spun into 'vast mines'. The reaction of the court was: 'Gold! Gold you say? We're going to need a bigger boat.' The riches

subsequently discovered in Latin America would help Spain become the most powerful country in the world.

Naturally, others wanted to get in on the act. In 1493 Portugal was threatening war to claim land Columbus had stumbled upon. Fortunately for the two countries, if not for the peoples of Latin America, Pope Alexander VI felt that he had 'the authority of Almighty God' to create an imaginary line running north to south down the Atlantic. All new land found west of it would be Spain's, anything east Portugal's, and anyone who said otherwise would be thrown out of the Church. And so peace was maintained, apart from the centuries of wars, looting, pillaging, slavery and pestilence that the Treaty of Tordesillas, as it was called, helped to stimulate in the conquered lands.

The Jews had gone, the Muslims were going, and so were Isabella and Ferdinand. By 1516 both were dead even as Spain advanced into its Golden Age – from about 1500 to 1681. It was marked by vast sums of money coming in from the gold and silver mines of South America which funded an increased standard of living, an expanding military and brilliance in architecture, literature and painting.

But Spain's regions continued to develop with differences in identity, politics and economics. The internal problems created by Spain's geography, the cracks holding back development, were papered over by a river of gold and silver from 10,000 kilometres away which flowed into the Atlantic and back to the kingdom.

Much of the wealth was spent on European conflicts. This meant there was less money for the Atlantic naval forces required to safeguard the routes funding the whole enterprise. By the mid 1600s the Spanish were losing control of the sea routes. Spanish merchant ships in the Caribbean would take on board Chinese goods hauled across land from Central American ports on the Pacific. They would join vessels loaded with silver and

gold, and, guarded by military galleons, head out to Cuba and onwards to Spain. But the pirates of the Caribbean learnt how to pick them off. Word spread that Europe's most powerful nation was becoming vulnerable. England's Elizabethan 'sea dogs', Walter Raleigh and Francis Drake, never ones to miss a bit of looting and murder, joined in with gusto, further undermining Spain's revenue flow.

In 1588 Philip II of Spain came up with a cunning plan, but failed to know which way the wind would blow. The big idea was to sail 130 warships into the English Channel and smash the English fleet, ending its ability to support the Dutch in their battles with Spain and steal Spain's treasure. As a bonus, Spain could invade England, overthrow the Protestant queen, then cross back to finally quell the Dutch rebellion. They had by far the heavier ships and ferocious firepower. What, other than everything, could possibly go wrong?

Having an admiral in charge who had sailed the open sea might have helped. Appointed four months before the Armada sailed, the Duke of Medina Sidonia had told his king: 'I know by the small experience I have had afloat that I soon become seasick.' The drain on funds had also left the Spanish navy in poor shape. And when they reached Calais, Medina Sidonia was left waiting for essential equipment without a deep-water port in which to shelter. The English seized their chance.

During the following battle the Armada suffered serious losses and its formation was scattered. It sailed up towards the North Sea to regroup. It was time to abandon the mission and head home, but the Spanish have a saying: 'La geographia manda' – geography controls everything. Geography was against them.

The Spanish needed to return south, but the winds blew in the wrong direction and the English were situated between them and the route back. They headed

further north, but as they rounded the tip of northern Scotland they ran into an unusually early North Atlantic storm. Many ships were driven onto the rocks of the Irish coast in freezing-cold weather. When the remnants of the fleet made it home in October only about sixty ships docked. As many as 15,000 men had been lost, and with them Spain's reputation as the world's greatest navy. A new century was on the horizon and the balance of power was shifting.

Spain simply wasn't ready to give up its perception of being the dominant power and unsuccessfully continued to wage war in the Netherlands to hold on to territory. During many of these years the Spanish Crown couldn't even control Spain.

The Basque uprising of the 1630s was triggered when Madrid, seeking funds for the wars, imposed a tax on Bilbao's cloth industry and requisitioned its huge salt stores. It didn't go down well. The rebellion lasted three years and it took the intervention of the army to crush it. The Basques never forgot.

In 1640 it was the turn of the Catalans. Spain launched a military campaign from Catalonia into France, the purpose of which appears to have been to ensure that Catalonia would have to be involved in the war. If the Catalans were fighting for their country, the logic went, they'd support the Spanish army. Somehow the Catalans, not known for their enthusiastic support for Madrid, failed to follow this line of thought.

Catalan leaders joined with the French, whose troops crossed the border, and together they defeated the Spanish forces. However, in 1648 France withdrew, and by 1652, after starving the city of Barcelona into submission, Madrid was back in charge.

The Catalans call the conflict 'La Guerra dels Segadors' – 'Reapers' War' – in homage to the peasantry. The anthem of Catalonia, officially adopted in 1994, is

called 'The Reapers'. The song can be traced back to 1640, the words to 1899, and it still concentrates minds in Castile:

Catalonia triumphant
shall again be rich and bountiful.
Drive away these people,
Who are so conceited and so arrogant.
Chorus: Strike with your sickle!
...
May the enemy tremble,
upon seeing our symbol.
Just as we cut golden ears of wheat,
when the time calls we cut off chains.

Spain's reputation, economy and population were in decline, and it was wracked with instability and violence. The population fell from about 8.5 million in 1600 to 6.6 million over the century. Military fatalities averaged 10,000 or so a year, emigration to the colonies another 5,000, and extreme poverty and recurrent plagues also held back growth. As it headed into the 1700s Spain remained a major power with territories around the globe, but in poor shape to hang on to what it had, fighting numerous wars and losing many of its European lands, including Naples, Sicily, Milan and Gibraltar, which the British seized in 1704.

Conflict plagued the century. Spain both fought and allied with France before seeing their joint fleet defeated by the British at Trafalgar in 1805. Two years later 30,000 French troops crossed into the peninsula, sparking the War of Independence. The word 'guerrilla' comes from this conflict, being derived from the word for war – *guerra*. It began to be used to describe groups

of Spanish irregulars who took a fearsome toll on the French.

Latin Americans were asking what legitimacy the mother country now had over them. Rebellions began in the north and south, led by Simón Bolívar and José de San Martín. After taking control over their regions, they converged on the centre and met on the central Pacific coast. Bolivar then mopped up the remnants of loyalist resistance in Upper Peru, which was renamed Bolivia in his honour. With Mexico taking a similar path, South America was free of Spanish control by 1826.

Spain, however, was not free of violence. On and on it went through the 1800s, urban against rural, liberals against traditionalists, region against region, Spaniard against Spaniard. The civil wars helped the military to embed themselves into the political machinery of the country. Staunch Catholics were pitted against liberals attempting to reduce Church power. During the various rebellions, attempted coups d'état and outright war, both sides committed atrocities that contributed to a lasting bitterness which would spill into the twentieth century.

In the second half of the nineteenth century Madrid attempted to catch up with the Industrial Revolution it saw rapidly developing in Britain, Germany and France, three rivals who all developed a greater sense of unity than Spain did. However, the slow growth of the rail and road network struggled to knit the economy together and it continued to trail those of countries further north. The population remained divided, with many still more loyal to region than country. The last of the old empire had broken free in 1898 with the loss of Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines. Although the Ottoman Empire had been dubbed the 'Sick Man of Europe', Spain was not in the best of health either. And if it was no longer a great power, there was even less reason for the regions to identify as Spanish.

Despite managing to stay out of the First World War, Spain was not immune to the clash of right- and left-wing politics that was increasingly being felt across Europe with the rise of fascism and communism. It was what passed for a democracy in that age but the roots were weak. A military coup brought the dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera to power in 1923, but his rule lasted only six years. When elections were held in 1931 the Republicans won, and the new government declared Spain a republic. It set about removing senior army officers, attacking the privileges of the Church, nationalizing landed estates and giving large wage increases to industrial workers. In short, it guaranteed opposition from the four most powerful forces in the land: the Church, the military, the landed gentry and the industrialists.

It was less than a year before the next attempted coup. It failed, but the chaos around it forced another election in 1933. In came a right-wing government which immediately overturned the policies of its predecessor, including those granting Catalonia greater freedom. In 1936, amid a wave of strikes, brutal suppression and an economy in tatters, another election was held. This time the left came back to power in the shape of the united Popular Front, but the differing factions were now gravitating towards the extremes and Spain was sliding towards the abyss of civil war.

On 12 July José Castillo, a Republican loyalist and the head of the Popular Front government's paramilitary Assault Guards, was assassinated. Revenge was swift, and equally brutal. The same night police officers and left-wing gunmen raided the home of José Calvo Sotelo, a leading right-wing politician. As he was driven away in a police van, he was shot in the back of the neck.

Thousands of right-wing supporters attended Sotelo's funeral before marching into the city centre to be confronted by the Assault Guards, who shot dead several

protestors. The murder of Sotelo was regarded by the right wing as the final outrage. Three days after the funeral the army uprising began when the Army of Africa, based in Melilla, mutinied under the command of four generals, including Francisco Franco, triggering the Spanish Civil War.

Over the next two years, the conflict raged bitterly. With Hitler and Mussolini supplying a trained army, it was a matter of time before the Nationalists would grind down resistance despite Soviet attempts to arm the Republicans.

By the winter of 1938–9 the Republican forces were exhausted, their food stocks depleted by blockades and the 3 million refugees who had fled the savage repression of Franco's forces in conquered territory. In January 1939 500,000 civilians and soldiers left Barcelona in freezing conditions, heading for the French border. Some, in what became known as *La Retirada* ('the retreat'), had to walk the 160 kilometres even as German and Italian planes strafed the columns.

Franco's forces entered Barcelona, and at the end of February Britain and France recognized Franco as head of government. In March 200,000 troops entered Madrid unopposed. Many citizens lined the streets to celebrate their victory; many others spent a sleepless night fearing the inevitable revenge Franco would wreak.

April saw Franco accept an unconditional surrender. Historians differ as to the number of those killed; estimates range from half a million to a million if hunger and lack of healthcare are factored in. Tens of thousands of men and women were executed by both sides and the post-war period saw thousands more Republicans murdered as Franco's version of fascism tightened its grip on every aspect of life. Early in the war one of Franco's generals, Emilio Mola, had said: 'It is necessary to spread terror. We have to create the

impression of mastery, eliminating without scruples or hesitation all those who do not think as we do.'

A cult of personality emerged around the general who became known as 'El Caudillo' – the leader. The liberal laws of the Republicans were swept away. In their stead came a wave of legislation by which women were banned from being university lecturers, and not only could they not serve as judges, they couldn't even testify in trials. The Church did not demur at the concept that divine providence had sent Franco to save the nation, and the junta promoted the idea that the nation was a single, unitary entity. That meant regional identities such as Basque and Catalan would have to be quashed. The languages of both provinces were banned from the public sphere, backed by a government slogan which said: 'Si eres Español, habla Español!' ('If you are Spanish, speak Spanish!'). Catalan and Basque retreated into the private sphere, spoken at home, but every syllable was a form of rejection of Madrid's authority.

Franco ruled until 1975. He intended to create a homogeneous Spain but, like many before him, was defeated by the geography which had kept alive the regional languages and identities for so long. One of the fortresses he ran up against was the Camp de Les Corts stadium – home to Barcelona FC. Franco was known to support Real Madrid, not so much as a fan but to create a symbol of Spanish success. He could hardly promote a club from a region which wanted autonomy. The regime had changed Barcelona FC's name into Castilian and altered the club badge so that the Catalan flag on it resembled the Spanish flag. But it couldn't alter the spirit of the fans. Thousands would sing in Catalan – after all, the police could hardly arrest them all. The tradition survived the move to Camp Nou in the late 1950s. Across in the Basque Country, supporters of Athletic Bilbao showed their view of Madrid in a similar manner. Many in both cities still do.

The *sardana*, a Catalan folk dance, was also banned. It involves people linking hands in a circle that widens and shrinks as they join or leave. Naturally, the Catalans performed it wherever and whenever they could as an act of defiance, the circle symbolizing unity.

Others were more direct in their opposition. Throughout the 1940s Franco's Civil Guard forces were harassed by what they termed 'bandits' but were actually guerrilla fighters. Some operated from across the border in France, others from mountainous regions inside Spain, sometimes surfacing in the cities. However, the regime's grip on power was never seriously threatened. Details are scarce, but studies suggest that several thousand guerrillas were killed, along with several hundred Civil Guards. The last rebel to die is thought to have been José Castro Veiga, shot in Galicia in 1965.

The state-run media was silent about most of these events and the public knew little of the situation; they were trying to make ends meet in an economy battered by war and which had fallen to levels previously seen in 1900. Franco imposed an economic system known as autarky – self-sufficiency, state control of prices, and limited trade with other countries. It had a devastating effect. The 1940s became known as 'Los Años de Hambre' – the years of hunger.

Despite this, the regime found the money and (forced) labour to fortify the French border with several thousand bunkers, forming the 'Pyrenees Line'. The military knew that throughout the long, violent past many attackers had entered the peninsula by going through the low-lying corridors on each side of the mountain range, into the Basque Country and Catalonia. Many of the bunkers can still be found, now abandoned and overgrown with weeds; they are a physical reminder of the partially self-imposed isolation of the Franco years. The regime felt that foreign influences

weakened the purity and strength of Spain; as one of its top generals said, 'Spain is not Europe, it never was.'

Franco did have friends; the problem was they were called Adolf and Benito. With Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy destroyed, Franco's Spain was alone, stewing in its fascist juices. The Western powers would have nothing to do with a man who had sent 50,000 troops in the División Azul to fight alongside the Nazis on the Eastern Front. After the war Spain was a pariah state, shut out of the United Nations, the Marshall Plan and NATO.

Franco bided his time. He knew the British prized stability on the peninsula due to their ownership of Gibraltar and would be unlikely to support a violent overthrow of his regime. More importantly, the realpolitik forced upon the Western powers by the Cold War could be turned to Spain's advantage. The new threat in Europe was not fascism, but Soviet communism.

The Americans in particular were concerned that if the Soviets invaded Western Europe, some of Stalin's forces might swing south-west into Spain. They also thought of Spain in terms of their own 'Strategic Depth' – a space in which they could build defences and fall back into if they failed to stop the Red Army at the Rhine. A 1947 study by the US Joint War Plans Committee suggested that within three months of attacking Western Europe the Soviets could arrive at the Pyrenees. They would then take twenty days to cross the mountains, before advancing along the Atlantic coast to Lisbon and the Mediterranean coast to Barcelona. Within forty days they would be in Gibraltar, controlling access to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Tentative negotiations were opened to gain military basing rights. They took years, but in 1951 President Truman made it clear that policy towards Spain was changing, saying: 'I don't like Franco and I never will, but I won't let my

personal feelings override the convictions of you military men.'

The Pact of Madrid was signed two years later, granting the USA army, air force and navy bases in return for \$2 billion worth of military and economic aid over twenty years. The French were opposed, nervous that the Americans might abandon the defence of France in the case of war. In this scenario, democratic Europe's last stand would be made in fascist Spain.

Truman did not have to meet Franco; that dubious honour went to his successor, Dwight D. Eisenhower, in 1959 on the first ever visit to Spain by a serving American president. Less than twenty years previously Franco had been filmed walking in step with Hitler while giving the fascist salute to a Nazi guard of honour. Now he paraded around the streets of Madrid with an American president as a Spanish band played 'The Yellow Rose of Texas'. It was a bitter blow to those sections of society which yearned for a democratic Spain.

Nevertheless, everyday life became a little easier. The agreement meant that Spain had to relax trading restrictions and allow foreign investment. The quiet abandonment of autarky contributed to inflation, but by the 1960s Spain experienced an economic boom and Spaniards rushed to buy consumer goods such as washing machines and TV sets, items which had become the norm in Western Europe.

In the 1960s the dictator looked ahead to a post-Franco era. In 1969, aged seventy-six, his health had declined, and he signed the law of succession naming Prince Juan Carlos to succeed him as head of state and king. Franco believed Carlos would acquiesce in maintaining the political structures, the regime believed he could be their puppet, and the public believed he neither would, nor could, change their lives. He proved everyone wrong.

Francisco Franco died, aged eighty-two, in November 1975 after thirty-six years of totalitarian rule. The junta hoped to rule as kingmaker, but they hadn't counted on the king playing state-maker.

The president of the Cortes (the Spanish parliament), Alejandro Rodríguez de Valcárcel, said: 'It was the prince's task to succeed Franco only in his ceremonial functions.' But in his speech the new king contradicted regime philosophy: 'Spain must be part of Europe, and Spaniards are Europeans.' It wasn't spelt out, but to be truly a part of political, as well as geographical, Europe, Spain would have to become a democracy.

He had to tread a fine line, but Juan Carlos set about dismantling the political machine. He knew he must speak to all sides in Spain's many divides. He'd already said he would be 'King of all the Spaniards', a tacit recognition that the centuries-long project to create one people had failed; one of his next moves was to visit Catalonia and Galicia, giving speeches recognizing their individuality. At one point in Galicia, where Franco was from, he even spoke briefly in Gallego, the Galician language, which is closer to Portuguese than Spanish, and ended with a rousing 'Viva Galicia!' New times had arrived.

Political parties were reintroduced and restrictions on the media further loosened. The old guard attempted to block reforms, and there was constant fear of another army coup which might trigger a bloodbath. Nevertheless, the king navigated his way along the road to democracy. In 1976 a referendum was held. On a turnout of 77.7 per cent of voters, 97.4 per cent supported proposed reforms for Spain to become a parliamentary monarchy, with all political parties legalized including the communists, who were most feared by the Francoist remnants.

The next year Spain held its first democratic election since 1936. Of 350 seats, the centre-right party won 165

and formed the government. The social democrats came second with 118 seats, and the Communist Party third with twenty. As important as the winner was the loser. The AP party, founded by former Franco loyalists, won just sixteen seats. One, Manuel Fraga, managed to hold the right wing together as a political force but might be best remembered for accidentally shooting Franco's daughter in the buttocks while on a hunting trip. Either way, the Spanish people had overwhelmingly and categorically rejected Francoism.

However, Francoism refused to die. In 1981, 200 members of the Civil Guard led by Lieutenant-Colonel Antonio Tejero entered the parliament building in an attempted coup d'état. It's easy to think of Tejero as a pantomime villain, with his magnificent moustache and pistol-waving antics. At one point he tried to wrestle Deputy Prime Minister General Manuel Gutiérrez Mellado to the ground, giving up when the sixty-eight-year-old general refused to lie down. But this was deadly-serious stuff. Tejero, who was only one of the military ringleaders, fired shots into the air, as did some of the guards, using sub-machine guns. He pointed his weapon at the prime minister, Adolfo Suárez, who calmly faced him down. All this was captured on live TV.

At 1 a.m. King Juan Carlos appeared on television wearing full military uniform to say: 'The Crown, the symbol of the permanence and unity of the nation, cannot tolerate, in any form, actions or attitudes of people attempting by force to interrupt the democratic process.' And with that it was over. As arrests were being made elsewhere a dejected Tejero emerged from parliament at midday to be taken into custody. He and other ringleaders were sentenced to thirty years in prison, decades in which Spanish democracy took root.

The election of the Socialist Party in 1981 marked the first government in which no members had served

the Franco regime. Spain joined NATO in 1982, became a member of the EU in 1986, and adopted the euro in 1999. Its new constitution, which divided the country into seventeen regional administrations (now nineteen), recognizes the historic and geographical differences. But the oldest tensions still remain. That is true for Galicia, Catalonia, the Basque Country and to a lesser extent Andalusia.

In a dictatorship the 'solution' to regions seeking degrees of autonomy or independence is usually outright repression, but in a democracy, with its adherence to 'the will of the people', it is much more complicated. Joining the EU was supposed to be the answer to the questions about Spain's regionalism, relative backwardness and authoritarian tendencies. As long ago as 1910 the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset wrote: 'Spain is the problem and Europe the solution.' Perhaps it was; many Spanish people were content to relinquish degrees of sovereignty in order to gain not just from the economic benefits of the EU, but also its requirements for good governance. Within the EU, Spaniards are second only to Romanians in mistrust of their own government. However, the existence of the EU, and Spain's membership of it, has also opened up the possibility of regions being European, but not Spanish. The same is true in the UK, Belgium, Italy and elsewhere.

In recent years the most violent opposition to rule from Madrid came in the Basque Country. The region consists of seven historic provinces which were split between Spain and France in 1512. The Spanish side is about half the size of Northern Ireland and contains 2.2 million people. It begins as the western Pyrenees slope down towards the Bay of Biscay, then continues for about 176 kilometres along the coastline, where a majority of the population live and which houses heavy industries. The interior is mostly mountainous, a feature

common among peoples who retain a distinct difference from near neighbours, and is marked in the south by the Ebro River. The geographical area may span two states, but many Basques consider it still to be one nation called 'Euskal Herria'. Its language, Euskara, spoken by about a quarter of the population, predates the Indo-European tongues of the rest of Europe and is unrelated to any of them. For example, 'I live in Bilbao' translates as 'Ni Bilbon bizi naiz' and is constructed as 'I Bilbao in to live am.' Its roots remain a mystery, but they were strong enough to see off Latin, Arabic and Spanish.

This sense of nationhood has always driven calls for degrees of autonomy or even outright secession. Its most modern form came in the shape of ETA, which was founded in 1959. The initials stand for 'Euzkadi ta Askatasuna' ('Basque Homeland and Freedom'). In the Franco years Euskara was banned from being spoken in public at risk of imprisonment. Birth and marriage certificates which featured Basque names were erased in civil registries and replaced with ones in Spanish. The regime had stripped the Basque territory of any autonomous status; however, ETA was formed not to regain that status, but to create a Basque state straddling the Spanish–French border.

Its first victim was a police officer who was murdered in 1968. It went on to kill more than 850 people in a series of shootings and bombings targeting politicians, judges and ordinary civilians. The state responded by hunting down ETA units, but was accused of hundreds of cases of brutality against members of the public which continued for years after the fall of the dictatorship.

In 1989 ETA bombed a Barcelona supermarket, killing twenty-one men, women and children – the worst incident in four decades of murder and mayhem. However, the atrocity which did them the most damage was the murder of a single man, Miguel Ángel Blanco. In

1997 ETA kidnapped the twenty-nine-year-old Basque councillor and demanded that its members, in jails across the country, be transferred to Basque prisons within forty-eight hours. The event shocked the country; everyone knew that the government would not give in, and 6 million people came out on the streets to demand Blanco's release by ETA. Two days after his abduction he was taken to a forest, forced to his knees, and shot in the back of the head.

This was too much, even for many ardent supporters of independence. What public support ETA had began to seep away. The 1978 Spanish constitution had reinstated autonomy, and the region controls its own police force, taxation and media, enough to satisfy a majority of the population. After several broken ceasefires ETA finally agreed a 'complete cessation of violence' in 2011 and in 2018 announced it was disbanding. The Basques retain their sense of difference, and all recent opinion polls suggest they accept they can exist as an autonomous nation within the modern Spanish state. The situation was beautifully expressed by the President of the Basque Nationalist Party, Andoni Ortuzar, in an interview with the *Financial Times's* David Gardner: 'The average Basque need meet the Spanish state on three occasions: to get a driving licence, a passport or a pension. The rest is what we, the Basque institutions, give them.'

Many Catalans wanted more – full independence – and their fight to get it led to the biggest crisis since the 1981 attempted coup. Since the seventeenth century there have been numerous attempts to break free from Madrid, but this latest bid caught many people by surprise as the Catalans too had been granted a large degree of autonomy after Franco's death.

Catalonia is the wealthiest region in the country, a fact which has played a role in the recent upheavals. It is about four times larger than the Basque Country,

approximately the same size as Belgium, and has a population of 7.5 million, most of whom speak Catalan. It is wedged into a triangular shape in the most north-eastern corner of Spain. The region is framed by the Mediterranean Sea to its east and the Pyrenees to its north; to the west the Ebro River marks the border with Aragon, and to the south is Valencia. As with the Basques, the majority of the population now live near the coastline.

Catalonia became wealthy through its textile industry, but now has a diversified economy including heavy industry and tourism. This century, supporters of independence have been quick to tell the rest of Spain that Catalonia pays more into the national coffers than it receives in services. But the system of paying in, and receiving, is complex and the percentages can be argued in different ways. Nevertheless, it is clear that despite having only 16 per cent of the population, Catalonia accounts for almost 20 per cent of Spain's GDP and a quarter of its exports.

This meant that when the 2008 economic crisis hit, the independence movement was able to stir up old grievances about the 'injustice' of Catalan taxes being used by Madrid. By 2014 an 'informal' independence referendum was held, followed in 2017 by one approved by Catalonia's parliament, but declared illegal by Spain's Supreme Court. Both resulted in majorities for independence, but on very low turnouts. The run-up to the 2017 vote revealed the depths of the bitter split between Barcelona and Madrid. A few days before polls opened Spanish police seized millions of ballot papers from a warehouse, arrested officials, and moved to assert control of the Catalan police. The day of the vote saw riot police using batons to prevent people from entering polling stations. The chaos meant that claims of a 42 per cent turnout, and 90 per cent 'yes' vote, were difficult to prove. What was clear was that most

Catalans who were against independence boycotted the vote.

Despite this the Catalan parliament declared independence, leading Madrid to dismiss the Catalan Cabinet, suspend autonomy and impose direct rule citing Article 155 of the Spanish constitution. Some Catalan leaders were thrown in jail, others fled abroad.

Spain was not going to lose Catalonia without a fight. There are many reasons for this, including national pride and economics, but one sometimes overlooked is geographical. Throughout Spain's history armed forces from the north have moved into the country by using the narrow belts of flatter land each side of the Pyrenees – the Basque Country in the west and Catalonia in the east. The most efficient way of defending Spain in the north is to block these corridors, therefore the idea of an independent Catalonia or Basque state controlling them is anathema to Madrid. If either were hostile to Spain it would become a nightmare. There are now road tunnels through the Pyrenees, but from a military perspective these can be easily blocked. The corridors also lead into Spain's major land-based supply routes from the rest of Europe, and the two regions are home to some of Spain's biggest ports, including Barcelona and Bilbao.

Many other countries are taking a keen interest in this recent example of Spain's long struggle with insurrection. If an independent Catalonia was frozen out of the EU, China and Russia would attempt to make new friends and influence people. Russia has spent two decades trying to get a foothold in Greece; it would dearly love to achieve the same in the western Mediterranean. However, more plausible would be Beijing's purchasing power, barrelling into the ports of Barcelona, offering investment and trade as part of its global Belt and Road Initiative. China has been blocked in the EU due to the Union's economic clout and rules

against individual trade deals, and so instead China has been knocking on the door of Europe's non-EU countries and is a serious player in the Balkans, especially Serbia. During the Covid-19 crisis Serbia's politicians openly spoke of how the EU failed to help them, but praised Beijing's efforts. If Catalonia was a state, and Spain used its veto to prevent EU membership, it would be open to the Chinese strategy.

This is partly why the EU has been lukewarm about Catalonia's right of self-determination. When the Spanish police drove would-be independence voters out of polling stations and off the streets it looked terrible, but the national government argued that Catalonia did not have the right unilaterally to decide to hold the vote – and Brussels was notably restrained in its response. The day after the referendum the EU statement looked as if it could have been drafted in Madrid: 'Under the Spanish constitution, yesterday's vote in Catalonia was not legal ... this is an internal matter for Spain that has to be dealt with in line with the constitutional order of Spain ... these are times for unity and stability, not divisiveness and fragmentation.'

The EU, and leaders of the member states, would like the Catalonia problem to go away and so were further troubled in February 2021 when elections in Catalonia saw independence-supporting parties win a small majority in the regional parliament for the first time. An independent Catalonia would embolden those campaigning for an independent Corsica, Scotland, Flanders, Sicily, Bavaria etc. Every secessionist movement in Europe would learn lessons. There's a paradox here. True believers in the EU 'project' still want to move towards ever-closer union, eventually establishing a single entity with one currency and fiscal policy. At the same time, Brussels promotes strong regional governance through its cohesion policy, which divides the EU into more than 250 regions. But

endorsing stronger regional governance risks encouraging separatism, and therefore the EU risks breaking up nation states but with no guarantee that a separatist region would gain access to the EU.

Conversely, in the event of independence, the EU would be tempted to grant Catalonia membership in order to prevent China moving in even though this would further encourage other regional nationalists. Brussels would also be nervous that if it did not allow Catalonia in, an alternative to the EU could be the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) which has access to EU markets. This brings us to the UK.



There are numerous separatist movements in Europe that could take encouragement from a successful independence movement in Catalonia.

Catalonian membership of EFTA alone would not unduly worry Brussels, but Catalonian membership of a UK-dominated EFTA would. If, in the future, the UK joined EFTA, it would create a much stronger organization comprising Norway, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Switzerland, Catalonia and the UK. This might tempt

other EU nations to leave the Union and join EFTA. This is indeed all ‘mights’ and ‘coulds’, and some EFTA countries are nervous about UK membership, but the EU has to factor in these scenarios and act accordingly – in the first instance by supporting Spain’s territorial integrity, and, if that fails, by keeping its options open both to block China and to prevent a stronger EFTA.

The UK is in a difficult position on Catalonia. It needs to support self-determination due to its position on the Falkland Islands and Gibraltar, but simultaneously cannot endorse Catalanian self-determination because it opposes Scottish independence. It backed Spain after the referendum, but sits uncomfortably between two stools.

Spain has wanted Gibraltar back ever since it was lost to the UK at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It’s a prime piece of real estate guarding the exit and entrance to and from the Atlantic, and the Royal Navy has made good use of it down the centuries. The UK says it will abide by the wishes of the Gibraltarians. In 2002, when they were asked if they wanted to share sovereignty with Spain, 99 per cent said, ‘No thank you’.

If Gibraltar was under Madrid’s control it would form a key part of Spain’s modern defence posture. The country has more than 8,050 kilometres of coastline to defend, and four-fifths of its imports come in by sea. It has the largest fishing fleet in the EU, part of which ventures as far as the Indian Ocean, and more than sixty islands, some of which, as we noted earlier, are a very long way indeed from the mainland. To protect this requires a large navy, and a large navy needs ports.

Fortunately for Spain it has many, including deep-water harbours. On the north-west tip of Galicia, the harbours at Coruña and El Ferrol look out into the Atlantic and guard the approaches to France and the English Channel. The main base for the Mediterranean is

in the southeast at Cartagena, which houses submarines as well as surface ships. This is also the headquarters of the Maritime Surveillance and Action Operations Centre. It monitors the Mediterranean and the Atlantic up past the Canary Islands, and sends the information to a huge bunker in Madrid for action. In the south, Cádiz looks after the Straits Maritime Zone and protects the deep-water port of Seville 80 kilometres inland. The Spanish territories of Ceuta and Melilla on the Moroccan coast each house several thousand troops and limited naval assets.

The region between Morocco and Gibraltar is a crossroads for people and drug-smuggling. Large quantities of both enter Europe via Spain having crossed the Strait, which is the second-busiest shipping lane in the world. Every year thousands of migrants attempt to scale the fences separating Morocco and Spain, knowing they are the EU's border with Africa, but, despite the short distance, far fewer people cross into Europe via this route than they do from Libya to Italy. This is mostly because Libya is a failed state whereas Morocco has a functioning administration which co-operates with Spain. Both countries are acutely aware of the situation in the Sahel and fear that if the Sahel countries fall apart it will destabilize Morocco, with a knock-on effect on Ceuta, Melilla and mainland Spain. Hence Spain is involved in training government forces in Mali and elsewhere.

The other main navy base is in the Canary Islands, which also hosts army and air-force installations. The Canaries face the Gulf of Guinea, where Spain has economic interests and which is crucial for its trading routes and modern communication system via underwater cables.

To achieve the defence of trade routes and shipping and fishing fleets, the navy has about 130 ships, 20,000 personnel, and can call on 11,500 troops in the

Infantería de Marina – the Marines. They are backed by the army and air force, and the Americans and NATO. The USA retains two bases in Spain, Naval Station Rota near Gibraltar and Morón Air Base located about 50 kilometres south of Seville. Spain is involved in Operation Atalanta, the EU's anti-piracy naval mission off the Horn of Africa. When the UK withdrew from the EU, the mission's HQ was transferred to the part of the Rota naval base used by Spain.

For all its faults and its problems, modern Spain is a success story. It survived the 2008–9 financial crash, recovering to become one of Europe's largest economies. It has an excellent infrastructure and vibrant cities populated by people with the highest life expectancy in Europe.

It wrestles, as do its peers, with the issues of climate change, population movement, economic problems and splintering politics, but it is in reasonable shape to take them on. Its coal has gone, it never had much oil or gas, but one-sixth of its energy needs now comes from hydropower and it has sunshine in abundance. Spain is one of Europe's leaders in renewable energy, especially solar and wind.

Spain will continue to face external pressures, but its main challenges come from within and are based on its geography. For the foreseeable future, the kingdom brought together in the 1500s will still have to balance the tensions of being a nation state comprised of nations. Despite all this, though, the sentiment of Franco's general – 'Spain is not Europe, it never was' – has never seemed less true.