

Devolution: Czechoslovakia

The Velvet Divorce was the unofficial name given to the separation of Czechoslovakia into Slovakia and the Czech Republic in the early 1990s, earned because of the peaceful manner in which it was achieved.

The State of Czechoslovakia

At the end of the [First World War](#) the German and Austrian / Hapsburg empires fell apart, enabling a set of new nation states to emerge. One of these new states was Czechoslovakia. Czechs made up around fifty per cent of the initial population, and identified with a long history of Czech life, thought and statehood; Slovaks comprised around fifteen per cent, had a very similar language to the Czechs which helped bind the country together, but had never been in their 'own' country. The rest of the population were German, Hungarian, Polish and others, left by the problems of drawing boundaries to replace a polyglot empire.

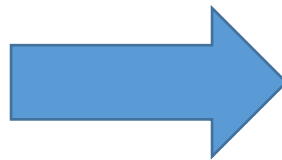
The Velvet Divorce

The Czech and Slovak populations in Czechoslovakia had been drifting apart over the course of the state's existence, and when the Soviet Union had dissolved in 1991, and when the newly democratic Czechoslovakia came to discuss the new constitution and how to govern the nation, they found many issues dividing the Czechs and Slovaks. There were arguments over the varying sizes and growth rates of the twin economies, and of the power each side had: many Czechs felt the Slovaks had too much power for their respective numbers. This was exacerbated by a level of local federalist government which had created government ministers and cabinets for each of the two largest populations, effectively blocking full integration. There was soon talk of separating the two into their own states.

Elections in 1992 saw Vaclav Klaus become Prime Minister of the Czech region, and Vladimir Meciar Prime Minister of the Slovak one. They had different views on policy and wanted different things from government, and were soon discussing whether to tie the region closer together or split it apart. People have argued that Klaus now took a lead in demanding a division of the nation, while others have argued Meciar was a separatist. Either way a break seemed likely. When Havel encountered resistance he resigned rather than oversee the separation, and there wasn't a statesman of sufficient charisma, and sufficient support, to replace him as a president of a unified Czechoslovakia. While politicians weren't sure whether the general public supported such a move negotiations developed, in such a peaceful manner as to earn the name 'Velvet Divorce'. Progress was swift, and on December 31st 1992 Czechoslovakia ceased to exist: Slovakia and the Czech Republic replaced it on January 1st 1993.



Czech and Slovak Republics



Devolution: The breakup of Yugoslavia

With the fall of the Austria-Hungary empire at the end of World War I, the victors threw together a new country which was composed of more than twenty ethnic groups - Yugoslavia. Just over seventy years later that piecemeal nation disintegrated and war broke out between seven new states. This overview should help clear up some confusion about what's in place of the former Yugoslavia now.

The constitution of Yugoslavia established six constituent republics in the federation: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. Serbia also had two autonomous provinces: Kosovo and Vojvodina.

By 1992 the Yugoslav Federation was falling apart. Nationalism had once again replaced communism as the dominant force in the Balkans.

Slovenia and then Croatia were the first to break away, but only at the cost of renewed conflict with Serbia. The war in Croatia led to hundreds of thousands of refugees and reawakened memories of the brutality of the 1940s.

By 1992 a further conflict had broken out in Bosnia, which had also declared independence. The Serbs who lived there were determined to remain within Yugoslavia and to help build a greater Serbia. They received strong backing from extremist groups in Belgrade. Muslims were driven from their homes in carefully planned operations that became known as "ethnic cleansing".

After an economic and political crisis in the 1980s, the rise of nationalism, and war, Yugoslavia broke up along its republics' borders, at first into five countries. Today, seven countries exist.

Serbia

Austria blamed Serbia for the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand in 1914 which led to the Austrian invasion of Serbia and World War I.

Although a rogue state called the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that was exiled from the United Nations in 1992, Serbia and Montenegro regained recognition on the world stage in 2001 after the arrest of Slobodan Milosevic. In 2003 the country was restructured into a loose federation of two republics called Serbia and Montenegro.

Montenegro

Following a referendum, in June 2006, [Montenegro](#) and Serbia split to form two separate independent countries. The creation of Montenegro as an independent country resulted in Serbia losing their access to the Adriatic Sea.

Kosovo

The former Serbian province of [Kosovo](#) lies just south of Serbia. Past confrontations between ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and ethnic Serbs from Serbia drew world attention to the province, which is 80% Albanian. After many years of struggle, Kosovo unilaterally declared independence in February 2008. Unlike Montenegro, not all the countries of the world have accepted the independence of Kosovo, most notably Serbia and Russia.

Slovenia

[Slovenia](#), the most homogenous and prosperous region of the Former Yugoslavia, was the first to secede. They have their own language, are mostly Roman Catholic, have compulsory education, and a capital city (Ljubljana)

which is a primate city. With a current population of approximately two million, Slovenia avoided violence due to their homogeneity. Slovenia joined both NATO and the EU in the spring of 2004.

Macedonia

[Macedonia's](#) claim to fame is their rocky relationship with Greece due to the use of the name Macedonia. While Macedonia was admitted to the United Nations, it was admitted under the name of "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" because Greece is strongly against the use of the ancient Greek region for any external territory. Of the two million people, about two-thirds are Macedonian and about 27% is Albanian. The capital is Skopje and key products include wheat, corn, tobacco, steel, and iron.

Croatia

In January 1998, [Croatia](#) finally assumed control of their entire territory, some of which had been under the control of Serbs. This also marked the end of a two-year United Nations peace keeping mission there. Croatia's declaration of independence in 1991 caused Serbia to declare war.

Croatia is a boomerang-shaped country of four and a half million which has an extensive coastline on the Adriatic Sea, and it almost keeps Bosnia from having any coast at all. The capital of this Roman Catholic state is Zagreb. In 1995, Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia signed a peace agreement.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The virtually landlocked "cauldron of conflict" of four million inhabitants is composed of about one-half Muslims, one-third Serbs, and just under one-fifth Croats. While the Winter Olympics of 1984 were held in [Bosnia-Herzegovina's](#) capital city of Sarajevo, the city and the rest of the country were devastated by war. The mountainous country is trying to rebuild infrastructure since their 1995 peace agreement; they rely on imports for food and materials. Before the war, Bosnia was home to five of Yugoslavia's largest corporations.

The former Yugoslavia is a dynamic and interesting region of the world which is likely to continue to be the focus of geopolitical struggle and change as the countries work to gain recognition (and membership) in the European Union.



Devolution: Catalonia

Proud of its own identity and language, Catalonia is one of Spain's richest and most highly industrialized regions, and also one of the most independent-minded.

With a distinct history stretching back to the early middle ages, many Catalans think of themselves as a separate nation from the rest of Spain.

Most of the region's population lives in Barcelona, its vibrant political and economic hub and a popular European travel destination.

- **Politics:** Catalonia's leader is pushing for a referendum on self-determination after elections in 2012 backed pro-independence parties
- **Culture:** Catalonia's laws require teachers, doctors and public sector workers to use Catalan, an official language along with Spanish
- **Economy:** Catalonia is one of Spain's wealthiest but most indebted regions. Harsh austerity measures have boosted separatist sentiment

But it is manufacturing - traditionally textiles, but more recently overtaken in importance by the chemical industry, food-processing, metalworking - that make the region Spain's economic powerhouse, along with a growing service sector.

Initially retaining its own institutions, the region was ever more tightly integrated into the Spanish state, until the 19th century ushered in a renewed sense of Catalan identity, which flowed into a campaign for political autonomy and even separatism. The period also saw an effort to revive Catalan, long in decline by then, as a language of literature. Catalonia now has its own parliament and executive - together known as the "Generalitat" in Catalan - with extensive autonomy.

Until recently, few Catalans wanted full independence, but Spain's painful economic crisis has seen a surge in support for separation. Many Catalans believe the affluent region pays more to Madrid than it gets back, and blame much of Spain's debt crisis on the central government.

A regional government backed by the two main separatist parties - in power since snap elections in November 2012 - held an informal, non-binding vote on independence in 2014, with 80% of those taking part voting "yes". The Spanish government says Catalonia has no constitutional right to break away.



Devolution: Scotland (United Kingdom)

Scotland's leaders want another independence referendum. Scottish voters don't.

April 26, 2017

After Britain has its general election, the next question is likely to be whether there is another referendum on Scottish independence. It was only in 2014 that Scotland voted to remain in the United Kingdom by a 55-45 percent vote. The referendum was described by the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) as “once-in-a-lifetime” event. So, what has changed?

The short answer is, of course, Brexit (Britain's exit from the European Union). For the SNP, this constituted a “material change” of sufficient magnitude to warrant a second attempt at independence. Yet, despite some encouraging signs for the nationalists, countervailing electoral and economic pressures may derail independence efforts once again.

At first glance, the SNP will start the next referendum campaign under more favorable circumstances than those of 2012. Scottish independence was at that point supported by 24 percent of the population (34 percent when excluding Don't Knows), with support rising to 45 percent in 2014 by the day of the referendum. The swing that will be required for the nationalists in the next referendum is significantly smaller, and there a number of factors that suggest propitious timing for a rerun.

The first is Brexit. The nationalists hope to capitalize upon the fact that Scotland voted 62-38 percent to stay in the European Union, portraying the outcome of the Brexit referendum as a denial of Scotland's democratic will.

“Do you think that Scotland should be an independent country?”

Brexit may not be enough to nudge Scottish population toward independence. Indeed, while a large majority of the Scottish population voted to remain in the E.U., a third of SNP supporters did not. This has created an uncomfortable conundrum for the nationalists. They are justifying a second independence referendum by saying that Brexit result contradicts Scotland's democratic will, but a sizable minority of independence supporters were actually pro-Brexit. Some independence supports see the E.U. as another undemocratic union, and the pro-E.U. SNP was actually strongly opposed to Britain entering the E.U. back in 1975.

Furthermore, Scotland may have to leave the E.U. along with the rest of Britain before any vote on independence and might not be able to rejoin easily. Countries like Spain, which fear their own separatist movements, might be opposed.

Independence may be costly

The 2014 independence campaign struggled to calm fears about whether an independent Scotland would be economically viable. Those fears may be heightened in 2017

Why is the SNP pushing for a new vote?

Without a convincing economic plan, support for independence is likely to remain low. The problem for the pro-independence campaign is that formulating such a plan is even harder now than it was in 2014. In addition, there are now a number of new factors which both exacerbate preexisting concerns while creating new ones.



https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/04/26/scotlands-leaders-want-another-independence-referendum-scottish-voters-dont/?utm_term=.cd7d440fc84c

Devolution: Canada

Who are the Nunavut

Nunavut is the newest, largest, and northernmost territory of Canada. It was separated officially from the Northwest Territories on April 1, 1999, via the Nunavut Act and the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act.

Nunavut is the largest in area and the second-least populous of Canada's provinces and territories. One of the world's most remote, sparsely settled regions, it has a population of 35,944, mostly Inuit, spread over an area of just over 1,750,000 km² (680,000 sq mi), or slightly smaller than Mexico



As of the 2016 Canada Census, the population of Nunavut was 35,944, a 12.7% increase from 2011. In 2006, 24,640 people identified themselves as Inuit (83.6% of the total population), 100 as First Nations (0.34%), 130 Métis (0.44%) and 4,410 as non-aboriginal (14.96%)

Nunavut Devolution

Nunavut is the last territory to begin devolution, the process of transferring powers belonging to the federal government to the territorial government. The first powers in line for devolution will be the control of Crown lands and resources.

"We do want to take hold of our land, our resources and at the end of the day we want to become an independent territory where we generate our own revenue and don't have to always depend on the federal government for our funds for our territory," Premier Peter Taptuna told CBC. "We fully understand the implications, impacts and benefits."

Devolution in Quebec

Quebec has voted twice against independence, but the question has never been settled or gone away.

On a summer evening in 2014, along streets lined with onlookers waving the blue and white fleur-de-lis flag rather than the Canadian maple leaf, a parade was staged in Quebec City retelling the story of the settlement of New France.

Passing under the ramparts of the fortified old city were mock-ups of the sailing ships that arrived here in the early 17th Century to found a French colonial outpost. Carrying muskets and swords, men marched dressed as combatants from the Seven Years' War between France and Britain, remembered here as the War of Conquest.

The festival celebrated Quebec's unique heritage - but doubtless many Quebecers would have gone home that night lamenting how, for all the French-speaking province's distinctive traditions, mannerisms and laws, it has never achieved outright independence.

However, although the province has the feel of a nation within a nation, voters here have twice decided against independence. In English-speaking North America, it thus remains an anomaly but not a country.

The first referendum in 1980 produced a lopsided result, with 59% voting to remain part of Canada and 40% voting to follow a secessionist path.

A second referendum in 1995 produced a photo-finish, 50%-49%, but the federalists still edged out the "sovereignists", as they are called here. The closeness of the result intensified the anguish of their defeat.

Stephane Parent, who helped organise the festival in Quebec City, exemplifies the separatists' longstanding dilemma. Though he considers himself a Quebecer first and a Canadian second, his Quebecois pride has not made him a fully-fledged separatist. He fears the economic uncertainty that might arise from independence.

"Are we still going to be with the Canadian dollar?" he asks. "Are we still going to trade with our neighbour Ontario? Is it going to be that easy to trade with the other Canadian provinces? How would the Americans consider us if we decided to split? Those were big concerns for a big part of the population."

This widespread concern has hobbled the separatist cause. The province nowadays accounts for almost a fifth of the Canadian economy - an independent Quebec would be the world's 44th biggest economy, not far behind Norway.

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