

## EDITORIAL



# Sovereignty Conflicts

Most social unrest and international conflicts are a result of sovereignty issues. When a state is not sufficiently democratic to accept that national sovereignty ultimately lies with the people, its inability to meet the needs of its citizens gives rise to insurgency movements and revolts calling for autonomy or independence.

In Europe, examples can be found in Scotland, the Basque Country, Catalonia, Corsica, Northern Ireland, Northern Italy, the Shetland Islands, Brittany, Flanders, Sardinia, Sicily, Alsace and Cyprus, among others. Further afield one can point to the cases of Palestine, Tibet, Kurdistan, Mali, Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia and Somaliland, the Western Sahara, Rwanda and Burundi, the islands disputed over by Japan, Russia and China, Quebec, the indigenous peoples of Chile and other countries in the Americas, ethnic minorities in China, New Caledonia, Taiwan, the Maldives, the Falklands, Siachen and Kashmir. In some cases, such as those of Quebec and Scotland, the state recognizes the democratic right to self-determination. In others, such as Spain, sovereignty claims by the people are limited by law.

At another level, sovereignty conflicts can also arise from the failure to recognize immigrants' right to vote. This is the case in India, Russia, Angola, South Africa, Ecuador, Algeria, Canada, Mexico and many other countries. They may also arise because of fishing rights or restrictions, access to fertile land (land grabbing), access to water resources (water grabbing), occupation of land by logging and mining companies (e.g. in the Amazon), peasants occupying land to cultivate, or shantytowns and slums (poor populations), as happens in Latin America.

Similarly, the Arab 'springs' might also be considered conflicts of sovereignty, due to the lack of democratic systems giving the majority of the population access to legislative and governmental action.

Sovereignty conflicts cannot be solved by law or armed force: reality has shown us otherwise. Instead, the search for effective solutions requires an analysis of the conflict and comprehensive citizen diplomacy.

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