## THE CONFLICTS OVER GIBRALTAR

What a large amount of metaphors have been used for Gibraltar! It is indicative that most of them are negative. Gibraltar has been "a thorn in the side of Spain," "a running sore" in the relations between Great Britain and Spain, even "a canker" (Levie 1983: X). It goes as far as "Gibraltar, Gibraltar, the Spanish *Delenda est Carthago*" (the 1915 speech of Vasquez de Mella, quoted in Atkinson 1951: 86). Felipe Gonzalez, the Spanish Prime Minister in 1982–1996, summed up the difference in British and Spanish attitudes toward the enclave: "For the British, Gibraltar is a visit to the dentist once a year when we meet to talk about it. For us, it is a stone in the shoe all day long" (*Financial Times*, May 9, 1991). The latter metaphor was put as a title of Peter Gold's first book on Gibraltar (Gold 1994). This summing up evokes two remarks. Gibraltar is not only a stone in Spain's shoe "all day long." While being less of a problem for Britain, it is still a problem for *both* the mainland and the surrounding state. Even one visit to the dentist per year gives no pleasure. Besides, taking care of the enclave costs Great Britain dearly (it did not acquire financial independence until the 1990s and even then there remained numerous indirect costs, sometime quite substantial). After all, Gibraltar is such a tiny "tooth."[1]

The British and Dutch army occupied the Rock in 1704, during the war with Spain. The British "propriety" over Gibraltar was confirmed by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. In 2004, Gibraltar celebrated a tercentenary of British presence. Throughout these three hundred years, the conflict over the issue of sovereignty has continued to exert its influence on Anglo-Spanish relations and, of course, on Gibraltar itself. The conflict is played in the MES triangle where Gibraltar represents an independent and active player. Does the present period of British-Spanish relations over Gibraltar represent a downgrading of the dispute or "merely a slumbering volcano ready to erupt at the appropriate time"? (Levie 1983, 2). While discussing potential solutions, Levie concludes with the following: "It may be assumed that Gibraltar will remain British for many years to come. However, the possibility always exists of the occurrence of an event, or events, which will change the situation with startling rapidity; and whatever occurs, it may be prognosticated that before the end of the century Gibraltar will be under Spanish sovereignty. The unanswerable questions are how much before the end of the century? And under what conditions?" (1983, 117).

Well into the 2000s, Gibraltar is still British.

The stance of Gibraltar's leaders on the issue was always strong. Joshua Hassan, the leader of the Association for the Advancement of Civil Rights (AACR) party since 1947, was known for his strong views on the issue. He

became Gibraltar's first chief minister as the Constitution was adopted in 1964 and kept this post—with an interruption of 1969–1972—until 1987. In 1987, Adolfo Canepa, Gibraltar's chief minister since then, made his first public announcement stressing that Gibraltar would not be Spanish even in 100 years (*El Pais*, December 11, 1987, cited in Gold 2005, 97). Could he be right? Out of the positions surveyed, his corresponds most closely to what the theory of enclaves would predict, given that no cardinal changes in the composition of the population will occur in the enclave.

Gold poses a similar question as the title of his book: should Gibraltar be British or Spanish? He enumerates three factors at work (Gold 2005, 2–5). First, despite Gibraltar being one of sixteen territories that remain on the UN list awaiting decolonization, it is in a conventional sense not an option for the enclave, since the Treaty of Utrecht says that if Britain should wish to "grant, sell or by any means to alienate" ownership of Gibraltar, Spain should be given preference to it. Hence, Gibraltar is not a straightforward case of a colony seeking independence (which Gibraltarians do not want) or establishing a free association with Britain (which Gibraltarians find an attractive option) or requesting integration with the colonial power (also found attractive by Gibraltarians but rejected outright by Britain). Second, Franco's policy of isolating Gibraltar has in effect alienated the Rock from Spain. For many years to come, even if Spain will do its best to change its attitude toward the enclave, the Gibraltarians will look at their neighbor with mistrust. Third historical factors concern the length of time and the consequences that this passing time has had on the societies involved and their positions. In 2004, Gibraltar celebrated a tercentenary of being British. In fact, Gibraltar is now British for an even period now than it was once Spanish (1462–1704, or 242 years). Britain was prepared to relinquish Gibraltar on several occasions in the eighteenth century. However, with the passing of time, not only did strategic interests evolve but also, more significantly, attitudes changed.

Gold also enumerates the geographical factors of Gibraltar's case. First, although much less now than in the times of the great naval powers, the Rock (as Gibraltar is often referred to) retains a strategic importance as an important intelligence-gathering center for NATO. One of NATO's command centres, GIBMED, is located in Gibraltar (although there are talks about its closure). Second, its small size is a factor. It would be difficult for it to achieve full independence and to be self-sufficient economically and defensively. Third, Gibraltar, as well as its mainland and the surrounding state, is located in Europe. It makes it a more sensitive case for domestic British politics than it might be were it an African or Asian colony. The former British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington is quoted as having said that "the problem for Spain is that Gibraltar is in Europe . . . the issue would be settled, just like Rhodesia and Hong Kong, if the Spaniards were black or Chi-

nese" (*El Pais*, August 4, 1987, cited in Gold 2005, 4). The fourth geographical aspect is that there are in fact two territories under dispute: the town itself and the isthmus that connects the Rock to Spain. The isthmus was not covered by the Treaty of Utrecht and has been occupied by Britain since 1814.

Finally, two other factors restrain Spain's drive on the issue. Spain has to deal not only with Gibraltar but also with its own two exclaves on the Moroccan coast, Ceuta and Melilla, as these territories are claimed by Morocco and unpleasant connotations appear every time that progress is made on Gibraltar. Spain insists, however, that there is no parallel between its North African exclaves and Gibraltar. Finally yet importantly, growing separatism or interest in self-determination by Spain's regions, most notably the Basque country and Cataluña, is at play. Should Gibraltar come under Spanish sovereignty with a degree of autonomy greater than that enjoyed by even the most autonomous Spanish communities, it would inevitably arouse claims by these regions for more autonomy. These two factors help explain why Spain sometimes restrains its attempt to reacquire Gibraltar.

## Drawing Parallels

Parallels were and are often made while searching for a political and economic solution for Gibraltar. Examples with other coastal enclaves are drawn to supply arguments during heated discussions. In addition to Ceuta and Melilla, Hong Kong aroused particular interest in Spain as Britain began to move toward a settlement over the transfer of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China in 1984. The particularly interesting fact from the viewpoint of the Gibraltar dispute was that Britain prepared to cede (and effectively ceded) not only the New Territories, which were subject to a 99-year lease under the Treaty of Nanking, but also Victoria (Hong Kong) Island and the Kowloon Peninsula, both of which were ceded to Britain in perpetuity and were not subject to lease. The latter two territories held a similar legal status to Gibraltar's under the Treaty of Utrecht. There are, however, a number of divergences. The New Territories, Victoria Island, and the Kowloon Peninsula—apart from Hong Kong itself—were not economically viable on their own. Furthermore, Britain accepted the transfer of Hong Kong's sovereignty without directly asking the Hong Kongers themselves. Meanwhile, two referenda conducted in Gibraltar have unambiguously shown that Gibraltarians want to remain part of Great Britain. Last, although Hong Kong had a good deal of economic freedom, it had virtually no democracy (apart from the semidemocratic Council initiated by Chris Patten a few years before the sovereignty transfer). In contrast, Gibraltar possesses a democratic system and democratically elects its assembly, its representative legislative body.

Parallels are unavoidable between Gibraltar, on the one hand, and Ceuta and Melilla, on the other. Despite Spain's constant rejection of any parallels between them, Morocco follows developments over Gibraltar attentively and does not miss a chance to compare the two to support its claim on the enclaves on the Moroccan coast. Britain, for its part, has been making the same comparisons, although admittedly from an opposite angle. Denis MacShane, Foreign Office Minister, commented in 2003, much to the irritation of Spain: "Gibraltar is for Britain rather like Ceuta and Melilla for Spain. It is not part of our territory, but the people there feel themselves to be very British, just as the people who live in Ceuta and Melilla feel themselves to be one hundred per cent Spanish" (*El Pais*, June 8, 2003; cited in Gold 2005, 322). MacShane felt that it was unlikely that the Gibraltarians would develop any change in their views "without a lengthy period of very calm and friendly relations with Spain," which could be 25 to 30 years (idem).

Besides, parallels are drawn, perhaps even more often, in the sphere of economy. The principal object for comparison is found in Hong Kong, too. This is quite natural, as Hong Kong is an obvious success story, which many would like to emulate. Each side draws upon the aspects that it finds beneficial to compare. Spaniards drew political parallels on several occasions between Gibraltar and Hong Kong in support of the claim over Gibraltar. On the contrary, the Gibraltarians themselves compared the two rather on economic grounds. For example, Gibraltar was keen to offer itself as an alternative to Hong Kong as a large financial center (Gold 2005, 119). A Gibraltarian delegation undertook a promotional tour to the Far East in 1989, and a Gibraltar information office was opened in Hong Kong with an attempt to entice to the island Hong Kong financial capital looking for a new location as the future of the Asian tiger under Chinese rule became uncertain.

This parallel drawing is not solely confined to Gibraltar, but rather typical when enclaves find themselves confronted by tricky situations. References to Hong Kong were repeatedly made by Ceuta and Melilla. They were also often made in Kaliningrad in the 1990s as the newly formed enclave desperately searched for a new economic specialization after the rupture of economic connections inside the disintegrated Soviet Union. Finally, comparisons were more than often made with Hong Kong itself! Hong Kong's governor from 1883 to 1885, Sir George Bowen, repeatedly asserted: "Hong Kong is the Gibraltar of the East" (Endacott 1973, 204). After World War II, the British Foreign Minister, Ernest Bevin, once described Hong Kong as "the Berlin of the Middle [*sic*] East" (Welsh 1993: 443).

## Solutions for Gibraltar

When Great Britain took over Gibraltar in 1704, the Spanish civilian population of the peninsula was given a choice of staying or leaving. About

4,000 elected to leave which they did carrying as many of their personal belongings as physically possible. Most of them reestablished themselves near the Hermitage of San Rogue, a few miles north of Gibraltar, where they founded the "Town of San Rogue Where the Most Noble and Loyal City of Gibraltar Dwells." Only about 70 persons (mostly Genoese fishermen) elected to remain, which was only permitted on the condition that they swear allegiance to the Archduke Charles as Charles III. So, virtually all (more than 98 percent) of the Spanish population left the town, and it was repopulated virtually from scratch.

Primary growth occurred in the nineteenth century, despite several episodes of yellow fever, each costing the town several thousand lives. By 1815 the civilian population of Gibraltar had grown to about 10,000—two and a half times the size of the garrison (that is, 14,000 in total)—thanks partly to an influx of immigrants fleeing Genoa and conscription in Napoleon's armies earlier in the century. By the end of the nineteenth century, the population reached 19,000, of which the vast majority—nearly 17,000—was Gibraltar-born citizens with British nationality (Jackson 1987, 181, 246). Population has stabilized in the last 30 years (see Table 8.1). Further growth became insupportable for the 6.5 $km^2$ of territory of the Rock.

The present-day population is a unique conglomeration, a mixture of people whose original nationalities were British, Cypriot, French, Genoese, Irish, Indian, Italian, Jewish, Maltese, Moorish, Spanish, and others. Hassan, the grand figure of Gibraltarian politics, asserted in 1986: ". . . we are an established community who have come from many parts of Europe but who today have an identity as a people; we are neither British nor Andalusian, but Gibraltarian. Let us say that we are British out of convenience . . . [We are] a combination of Mediterranean and Anglo-Saxon cultures, which equals Gibraltarian." He maintained further that, had not Gibraltar been so small, it would already be independent: "We are victims of geography, not history" (El Pais, September 21, 1986, cited in Gold 2005, 81).

In 1998, Great Britain undertook reorganization of the Government's responsibilities toward remaining colonies. Thirteen colonies with a total

**Table 8.1. Gibraltar's population in a historical perspective**

| *Year* | *British Gibraltarians* | *Other British* | *Non-British* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1704 | | | 70 | 70 |
| 1787 | | 512 | 2,874 | 3,386 |
| 1891 | 14,244 | 2,426 | 2,341 | 19,011 |
| 1961 | 17,985 | 4,809 | 1,132 | 24,026 |
| 1979 | 19,515 | 6,760 | 3,485 | 29,760 |
| 2002 | 22,882 | 2,627 | 1,986 | 28,520 |

Levie (1983, 126) for 1704–1979 data; http://www.gibnet.com/data/facts.htm for 2002, accessed May 2007.

population of 180,000 have remained so far. In the future all colonies were to be known as British Overseas Territories rather than British Dependent Territories. The reorganization concerned all colonies except Gibraltar. The official reason for excluding Gibraltar was its membership in the EU, which, it was claimed, justified its different treatment, though doubtless the Anglo-Spanish dispute must have played a part, too.

Several attempts were made by Spain to retake the Rock by force in the eighteenth century. The most remarkable of them was the Siege of 1779–1783. Since the 1960s, in an international climate supportive of decolonization, Spain has secured several UN resolutions in favor of resolving the issue. In 1969, Spain under General Franco tried to force Britain into negotiations by organizing a blockade of Gibraltar, a "modern" siege in a way. The frontier between Gibraltar and Spain was sealed on June 25, 1969; on the same day the ferry service from Algeciras was suspended; on October 1 Gibraltarian telephone and telegraph services to and from Spain were cut. Spanish workers, who made up a significant and important part of Gibraltar's workforce, were thus forced to leave. However, the blockade did not significantly damage the Rock's economy as the mainland supported its exclave. Moreover, it also stiffened the Gibraltarians' resolve to remain tied to Britain and alienated them further from Spain (Gold 2005, 2). From Spain's side, the blockade was a grave mistake, a fact that was later recognized by democratic Spain. Instead of making the enclave give up, it added to a strong antipathy and the feeling of mistrust. One Gibraltarian woman, who was eighteen at the beginning of the blockade, spoke at the referendum of 2002 approached, so 17 years after the border was reopened: "Before we had more dealings with Spain. When the border was closed, we got much closer to each other [in Gibraltar—E. V.], and now, even though the border is open, relations are not the same as they were" (*El Pais*, November 3, 2002, cited in Gold 2005, 328).

The land border was initially reopened in December 1982 and fully by 1985. Therefore, the land border was sealed off for sixteen years. In the beginning, passage was limited to Spanish and Gibraltarian pedestrians, as no tourists were allowed, and even they were allowed to cross the border only once a day in either direction. Generally, the "lifting of restrictions" comprises the free movement of people and vehicles; however, a customs post for goods remained, since Gibraltar was excluded from the customs union. Spaniards and Gibraltarians would enjoy and take advantage of each other's labor markets more so than other nationals seeking work in the two territories. A transition period of seven years was agreed upon before full freedom of movement of labor came into effect.

So what solutions are there for Gibraltar? Out of all the enclaves in the world, Gibraltar has drawn perhaps the most attention in terms of the search for a potential political solution, even more than Hong Kong in its

time. A number of options have been elaborated on and discussed over the years. The major ones are the following:

1. Sovereignty for Gibraltar. There are numerous problems with the vision of an independent Gibraltarian state. First, while the mainland would probably not stand in tough opposition to the proposal, Spain would fiercely oppose such a prospect. Second, economic implausibility of sovereignty is sometimes raised as a counterargument. Third, independent membership in the EU is unlikely due to its tiny size. It would make Gibraltar much less attractive as an offshore center. Last but probably most important, the Gibraltarians do not want it.
2. State in a free association with Great Britain.
3. One of the proposed solutions is the introduction of shared Anglo-Spanish sovereignty of Gibraltar. One of the problems with this proposal is that Britain would regard any agreement eventually reached to be permanent, whereas Spain is not ready to renounce its claim for full sovereignty of the enclave. The greatest obstacle, however, is the firm rejection of this idea on the side of the Gibraltarians.
4. Some form of integration with Britain. A poll conducted in 2003 showed that 39 percent were for integration, 32 percent for free association, 12 percent for a negotiated settlement, 9 percent for independence, and 6 percent for the current status quo (colonial status) (*Gibraltar Chronicle*, March 13, 2003, cited in Gold 2005, 335). The argument of most of Gibraltar's political leaders is that integration would mean a loss of the current level of self-government. There is also a question of the advantageous tax policy upon which the current economic prosperity of Gibraltar is built. Integration is, however, not acceptable for Britain, seemingly on three grounds: it will cause trouble with Spain; it will cause trouble with the UN; it would encourage other colonies to follow the example.
5. An "Andorra solution," with sovereignty invested in the people and a responsibility for defense resting with Britain and Spain.

A Spanish foreign minister once declared that the Rock was *una situatión anacrónica contraria a la lógica de la historia*. The British side argues to the contrary, "Spain is still embarked on a crusade to take the Rock away from us with concepts worthy of the Middle Ages" (Muller 2004, 43). It is peculiar that the same argument used by Spain in relation to Gibraltar is used by Morocco in relation to Ceuta and Melilla, although in that case the roles are reversed for Spain.

The central observation is that Gibraltarians themselves are an indispensable part of any solution, an essential part of answering the question of whether Gibraltar should stay British, turn Spanish, or become independent.

The role of Gibraltarians is decisive at this current stage (it was clearly not so in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). Any agreement eventually reached between Britain and Spain would be put to a referendum in Gibraltar, and both states would respect the results. Britain in the first place would be highly unlikely to ignore the collective views of the Gibraltarians. The British had already developed an "emotional, albeit somewhat irrational, attachment to the place" (Harvey 1996, 129) by the end of the nineteenth century, which has persisted until now. A public opinion poll in Britain in 2002 showed that 79 percent of the British population supported the view that the Gibraltarians should be allowed to determine their own future (*The Times*, March 19, 2002; cited in Gold 2005, 289). Spain is more reluctant to fully respect the views of Gibraltarians, as at least its official positions states that "the Gibraltarians cannot have the right of veto on matters discussed by two sovereign states" (*El Pais*, October 30, 2001). Another prohibitive issue is that Britain is determined to retain its military facilities on the Rock.

The first time Gibraltarians gave a definite answer to the question of the enclave's future was in a referendum in 1967. Out of a total 12,762 eligible voters 12,237 actually participated. This makes an extremely high rate of participation of 95.9 percent, demonstrating the profound interest Gibraltarians had in the question of the referendum. Of those who voted, 12,138 (99.2 percent) voted pro-British, with only 44 pro-Spain (and with 55 void ballots) (Levie 1983, 112).

Several years later, on November 10, 1987, 12,000 inhabitants demonstrated, calling on the British government not to make any concessions to Spain over the airport. The demonstration was led by Hassan and Bossano, the leaders of the two largest parties, wholly united on the issue of sovereignty despite their differences on other issues of Gibraltarian politics.

Gibraltarians proved their determination to remain British convincingly once again in a referendum in 2002. All political parties combined in their efforts to undermine any Anglo-Spanish negotiations. Almost the entire population took to the streets (the police estimate that 25,000, from the total population of 29,000, took part). It was probably the biggest demonstration ever in the world relative to the size of the population. The government of Gibraltar insisted that "this referendum is not about 'dialogue' or 'acceptable solutions.' It's about respect for our wishes and our political rights. It's about rejecting joint sovereignty as a principle and as a concept" (Government of Gibraltar Press Releases 207, November 5, 2002). The referendum following the demonstration had an 87.9 percent turnout. In it, 98.97 percent (or 17,900) of votes cast were in favor of rejection of the concept of shared sovereignty, with a mere 187 votes on the other side. Gibraltar's chief minister outlined the results of the vote in the following way: "Fellow Gibraltarians, today we have sent a clear message to the world and it is roughly divisible into three parts. One, that this is our homeland; two,

that we are people with political rights that we will not give up; and three, that those rights include the right to freely decide our own future." (Announcement of Chief Minister, *Gibraltar Chronicle*, November 8, 2002).

There is a general recognition of the loyalty of the Gibraltarians to Britain amongst the British population. The expression "as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar" has a moral as well as a geological significance (Gold 2005: 328).

## ENCLAVES WITHIN NATIONAL POLITICS

Enclaves are usually very small in comparison with their mainlands in terms of both size and population. An average true enclave has just one or two thousand inhabitants. Even the largest enclaves and exclaves look small relative to their mainland. Kaliningrad's 950,000 inhabitants make up no more than 0.6 percent of Russia's total population. Alaska makes somewhat more than 0.2 percent of the United States population. Despite being small regions, enclaves tend to receive a lot of attention in national politics. The enclaves demand a specific approach and special treatment of their unique problems. They cannot be treated as just any other regions. That justifies a high expenditure in terms of legal, political, and administrative work. A central government may opt to govern the enclave directly, or it may establish a special legal framework for administering the enclave. Besides, the realization of standard state tasks, such as defense, policing the border, customs control, and so on is more complicated in an enclave. Thus, political administration can sometimes become a real challenge for the central government.

Enclaves tend to be problematic, too. As we have just seen, they are likely to cause conflicts with the surrounding state and, therefore, become not only an issue of domestic politics but also of the state's foreign policy. An inherent problem of an enclave, stemming from its detachedness from the mainland, is that many issues, including insignificant ones, cannot be solved at a regional level, instead having to be solved at national level. Even insignificant issues are elevated to national governments and routine issues are internationalized. In other words, internal issues are externalized. Even small decisions take a long route via national government and foreign ministries. Some seemingly unproblematic decisions can be rendered virtually impossible to be taken or implemented due to national sensitivities.

To give an example, in 2004 the Indian province of Bengal refused to grant permission to extend power lines from the Bangladeshi mainland through the Tin Bigha Corridor to the Dahagram-Angarpota enclave. The provincial government justified its refusal by its lack of competence on the matter, as such decisions have to be taken in New Delhi. The enclave thus