



School of
Public Policy



UNIVERSITY OF
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Illustrative World Cases of Separation and Near-Separation

Technical Paper

Alberta Separation: How It Would Work

Appendix

The Economic and Fiscal
Implications of Alberta Separation

September 2026

NEAR CASES OF SECESSION OR SEPARATION BY COUNTRY

Contexts	State Emergence and Continuity	Political Dynamics	Community and Borders	Indigenous and Communal Claims	Core Institutions	International Relations and Recognition
Western Australia 1933 (successful referendum – separation discontinued)						
Western Australians voted strongly to separate in 1933, but the effort ended after the British Parliament declined to act without the support of Australia's federal government.	State institutions remained within Australia; no continuity.	Economic grievance; Great Depression; isolation; federal indifference; British and Australian constitutionalism.	Clear island-continent borders; domestic status questions only; enormous geographic size.	Indigenous rights and claims largely sidelined in separation debate.	Existing state institutions could not fully substitute for national defence/foreign policy/trade/isolation.	U.K./Commonwealth refused to enable separation; referendum never tested for legal effect and recognition.
Canada–Quebec 1980/1995 (referendum/hypothetical)						
Quebec held two referendums on sovereignty, both of which failed, with the very close 1995 result prompting clearer legal rules for any future attempt at separation.	High potential continuity if negotiated with federal government; risk if unilateral.	Civic vs. ethnocultural nationhood debate with Civil Code and British constitutional tradition.	Clear geography; minorities and jurisdictional disputes.	Treaty, Indigenous, Métis rights as central legal, political and financial issues.	Robust provincial institutions as basis for new national-level bodies; offload currency and banking in short term.	Recognition contingent on federal and international acceptance.
Scotland 2014 (referendum/hypothetical)						
Scotland held a negotiated separation referendum in 2014, with voters choosing to remain in the United Kingdom.	Strong devolved administrative continuity; needs national-level institutions.	Civic national identity; debates on EU, welfare, minority rights, largely British constitutional tradition.	Clear borders; citizenship/residency questions domestically sensitive.	Indigenous-specific claims limited; Gaelic/island community concerns matter.	Build on Parliament and courts; need currency, defence, foreign-affairs institutions.	Negotiated referendum eases recognition; unilateral moves face U.K. legal/political barriers.
Spain–Catalonia 2017 (unconstitutional referendum/hypothetical)						
Catalonia held a separation referendum in 2017 that Spanish courts had ruled unconstitutional; Spain did not recognize the ensuing declaration of independence and no separation occurred.	Regional capacity strong; unilateral moves risk constitutional and legal opposition.	Civic vs. ethnic Catalan narratives shape claims within Civil Code tradition.	Borders clear; intense domestic contestation over membership.	Not Indigenous in same sense; minority and resident protections would matter.	Modest local institutions, would need expanded judicial and fiscal/financial institutions.	Unilateral secession/separation faces legal blockade; recognition unlikely without agreement.
Canada–Alberta 2026 (referendum/hypothetical)						
Alberta is scheduled to vote in October 2026 on whether to remain in Canada or begin the legal process toward a future referendum on separation.	Provincial administration can run some services; needs national institutional buy-in.	Federal/economic/fiscal grievance frames meta-constitutional aims within Canadian constitutional tradition.	Provincial civic community; clear borders if uncontested; resource, transit and labour mobility could spark disputes.	Treaty, Indigenous, Métis rights as central legal, political and financial issues.	Modest local institutions need expanding; must build tax, diplomacy, currency, defence, central bank institutions.	Unilateral moves face legal hurdles; negotiated path improves recognition prospects.

COMPLETED CASES OF SECESSION, SEPARATION OR CONSTITUTIONAL REORGANIZATION BY COUNTRY

Contexts	State Emergence and Continuity	Political Dynamics	Community and Borders	Indigenous and Communal Claims	Core Institutions	International Relations and Recognition
Sweden–Norway 1905						
Norway's separation from Sweden was peaceful and negotiated, with the new state retaining substantial institutional continuity while establishing full political independence.	Phased continuity via existing bureaucracy.	Civic parliamentary identity.	Uncontested borders.	Sami excluded from consideration.	Parliamentary written constitution.	Negotiated, swift recognition.
Eire Constitution of 1937 (Ireland)						
Ireland's gradual separation institutionalized its distinct history and culture in the 1937 Constitution while retaining elements of British constitutionalism. It became a republic in 1949.	Largely continuity of Free State administration with key legal changes.	Assertion of Irish sovereignty and national identity; Catholic social influence within updated British constitutional tradition.	Claimed jurisdiction over all Ireland though Northern Ireland border remained.	Protestant/ unionist minority protections weak; partition implications unresolved.	New written constitution: president; Oireachtas; courts; redefined state name and symbols.	De facto recognition by U.K.; reinforced sovereignty but maintained partition tensions.
India–Pakistan 1947						
Partition created two new states through a rapid and violent division of territory, institutions and populations, with enormous human displacement and lasting disputes over borders and identity.	Chaotic administrative split; service breakdown.	Communal/religious nationhood central; modified British constitutional tradition.	Hindu-Muslim community violence; physical relocation; hasty, violently contested borders.	Princely states with tribal, communal and religious disputes (Kashmir).	Inherited legal order; divergent evolutions.	Immediate recognition; prolonged hostility.
Singapore–Malaysia 1965						
Singapore's separation from Malaysia was rapid and largely peaceful, with the new state building independent institutions while preserving strong administrative continuity and close economic ties.	Retained civil service; negotiated handovers.	Divergent governance visions (multiracial models); modified British constitutional tradition.	Uncontested borders.	Peripheral, not central.	Westminster-derived; strong executive in Singapore.	Negotiated split; rapid recognition.
Yugoslavia 1990s						
Yugoslavia's breakup was violent and prolonged, involving multiple declarations of independence, armed conflicts, ethnic displacement, contested borders and the creation of several successor states.	Institutional collapse; parallel administrations.	Ethno-nationalist exclusion and mobilization; civil law tradition.	Violent border/ redrawing contests.	Minority protections collapsed then rebuilt.	Mixed successor outcomes; international courts and military intervened.	Staggered, politicized recognition; interventions.

Contexts	State Emergence and Continuity	Political Dynamics	Community and Borders	Indigenous and Communal Claims	Core Institutions	International Relations and Recognition
Czechoslovakia 1993 (Czechia and Slovakia)						
Czechoslovakia separated peacefully through a negotiated political agreement, with Czechia and Slovakia dividing federal institutions, assets and responsibilities between two new states.	Peaceful split; bilateral division of functions.	Czech and Slovak national identities shaped constitutions.	Strong community definitions; uncontested borders.	Not central.	Written constitutions; parliamentary systems.	Amicable division; prompt recognition.
Eritrea–Ethiopia 1993						
Eritrea's separation followed decades of armed conflict and a UN-observed referendum, creating a new state but leaving difficult questions over borders, economic relations and shared institutions that later contributed to renewed conflict.	Built from liberation movement; uneven services.	Liberation legitimacy dominated; weak institutionalization.	Contested community; borders contested; later armed conflict.	Local ethnic complexity; limited formal settlements.	Provisional/centralized institutions; delayed constitution; order breakdown.	Initially recognized; later war and tension.
Soviet Union 1991 (Collapse and breakup)						
The Soviet Union's collapse produced 15 independent states, requiring the rapid division of political authority, assets, military capabilities and economic systems amid major institutional and economic disruption.	Central institutions dissolved; republics assumed administrative control unevenly.	Nationalizing elites and varied constitutional transitions.	Internal borders became international; some territorial disputes erupted.	Minority and titular nationality claims; widely contested.	Republics inherited Soviet structures then diverged in reforms.	Rapid recognition for many states; negotiated and contested outcomes in some cases.
St. Barthélemy–Guadeloupe 2007 (administrative separation/autonomy)						
Following a 2003 referendum, St. Barthélemy separated administratively from Guadeloupe in 2007 and became a distinct French overseas collectivity, gaining substantially greater self-government while remaining part of France. Its small, distinctive luxury-tourism economy was already well established before the change in status.	High continuity: French sovereignty and national institutions remained; local government assumed responsibilities previously exercised through Guadeloupe.	Locally supported status change implemented within the French constitutional system.	Existing island boundaries unchanged; small, distinct local community.	No major Indigenous or communal claims comparable to many sovereign secession cases.	Local governing and fiscal powers expanded, while France retained sovereign functions including defence, nationality and key legal functions.	No recognition issue. St. Barthélemy remained French territory; the change concerned internal constitutional status rather than sovereignty.

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South Sudan 2011						
South Sudan separated after decades of civil war and a referendum, but entered statehood with weak institutions, unresolved disputes with Sudan and severe economic and security challenges.	Very weak continuity; donor/UN support kept services.	Ethno-regional liberation identity dominant.	Community, borders and internal areas highly contested.	Multiple tribal/customary claims unresolved.	Provisional constitution; weak rule of law and institutions; breakdown of order.	Quick recognition; fraught relations with Sudan.