

OTHER NATIONS

The Rock

“Nation-Making in Gibraltar: From Fortress Colony to Finance Centre” by David Alvarez, in *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* (Nos. 1–2, 2001), University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada C1A 4P3.

Call it the mouse that didn't roar. Tiny Gibraltar, the one-square-mile “Rock” at the southern tip of the Iberian peninsula, has been a more or less happy colony of Great Britain for nearly 300 years. It's only because Britain withdrew troops and slashed subsidies in the 1970s and '80s that the Rock's 30,000 inhabitants are now thinking of loosening ties to the mother country.

“Mother country” is something of a misnomer. The native Spanish inhabitants fled after Britain took control in 1704 during the War of the Spanish Succession, and they were replaced by new arrivals from Britain and from all over the Mediterranean. The local culture was largely Catholic and Spanish-speaking.

During World War II, the British evacuated nearly the entire civilian population from the strategic enclave, notes Alvarez, who teaches at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan. The experience deepened the Gibraltarians' loyalty to the Crown—many of them wound up in Britain—even as the jarring reminder of the Rock's precarious position fostered interest in independence.

About one thing most Gibraltarians have been united: They want as little as possible to do with Spain. After his victory in the Spanish Civil War, dictator Francisco Franco tried to rally his countrymen by campaigning for the restoration of Gibraltar. Spain's poverty, belligerence, and backward

EXCERPT

The Uzbek Nexus

The Islamist rebels have defined Uzbekistan as the prize in the regional competition for hearts and minds. It is Uzbekistan that they have repeatedly attacked, for as the home to Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand, they see it as the key to Central Asia. Their choice of targets is not accidental.

The Uzbeks have a distinctive political culture, very different from that of their Kazakh, Kyrgyz, or Tajik cousins. Traditions of tribal democracy and inter-tribal confederation were strong among the nomadic peoples of the mountains and the plains but not in the sedentary culture of Uzbekistan. Its leaders have always celebrated traditions of hierarchy and authoritarianism. Among the nomadic peoples of Central Asia's plains and mountains, it is considered gracious to discuss and deliberate, whereas among the oasis peoples of Uzbekistan, it is considered gracious to obey, impolite to disagree, treachery to oppose. The Uzbek government has met treachery with ruthlessness, impoliteness with subtle manipulation. In the early 1990s [Uzbek leader Islam] Karimov succeeded in co-opting many proponents of the nascent opposition, the pre-independence nationalist Birlík (Unity) movement, isolating and hounding its leaders while simultaneously inviting talented young activists into his Soviet-based, but cosmetically reconstituted, “nationalist Uzbek” government. Guerrilla warfare is, above all, a competition based on skill at deception. Karimov will be a formidable competitor in this realm. So far he has succeeded in outmaneuvering his nationalist opponents. The difference now is that the groups carrying the banner of revolution are less nationalist than internationalist, and less movements than organized obsessions.

—Gregory Gleason, a political scientist at the University of New Mexico, in *Problems of Post-Communism* (March/April 2002)



Its geographical position is as solid as ever, but Gibraltar's political future remains uncertain.

politics were not attractive. In a 1967 referendum, only 44 Gibraltarians voted for union with Spain. In 1969 Franco closed the border, and though it was reopened in 1985, controls remain strict.

Gibraltar has steadily gained greater self-government and, especially in the last few decades, a stronger sense of national identity. Nationalists today are proud of *Yanito*—the widely used local version of “Spanglish”—and speak of their people as *los Yanitos*. A festive National Day holiday was inaugurated in

1993. Ongoing negotiations among Britain, Spain, and Gibraltar point toward some sort of de facto independence under British (or Spanish or European Union) sovereignty. But Alvarez is not so sure. Gibraltarians are forging new ties with Spaniards just over the border. To both groups, London and Madrid look far away. “Perhaps Gibraltarians and their . . . neighbours will eventually conclude that they have more in common with one another than they do with the nation-states of which they are now peripheral fragments.”

Mañana Never Comes

“Fox’s Mexico: Same as It Ever Was?” by Pamela K. Starr, in *Current History* (Feb. 2002), 4225 Main St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19127.

Hopes were high in December 2000 when Vicente Fox was sworn in as the first president of Mexico in more than 70 years who had no affiliation with the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). But the Fox government has been a disappointment and Mexico seems “stuck in neutral,” according to Starr, a professor of international relations at the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México in Mexico City.

Fox’s government has been plagued by confusion, indecision, and repeated missteps, Starr

says. And his National Action Party (PAN) and the PRI have been unable “to adjust their behavior to the new democratic political environment.” Political bickering substitutes for action, as “Mexicans of all stripes remain steeped in an authoritarian culture.”

Attempting to run Mexico as one would a private business, Fox has delegated much authority to his cabinet ministers, who have extensive experience in the private sector but little in politics. They “have regularly ruffled congres-