

Student Essay on Centrifugal and Centripetal Forces in Spain

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Essay

Europe's geographical features have shaped the developments of its many nations and states. The long mountain chains in Europe divide the continent into five peninsulas, and prove that they are just as important to the cultural development as they have provided cultural separations within the continent. Spain, situated on the Iberian Peninsula, is separated from the rest of Europe by the Pyrenees Mountains and connected to Africa by Gibraltar. As a result, Spain's geographical location is a crossroads of cultures, and has generated centripetal and centrifugal forces.

Spain's physical geography generates centripetal powers. Most of Spain's borders follow natural barriers of geography, only in a few cases are they questioned. The Pyrenees Mountains separates Spain from France, allowing developments of their own nations. The borders are clear with the coastline along the Mediterranean Sea (except the Spanish-Portuguese border). In addition, Spain is relatively small with 194,896 square mile, which contributes to the centripetal forces.

Centrifugal forces are the results of geographic features as well. There are differences between the arid, poor inner Meseta and the productive, rich coastal areas. The Meseta, or the heart of the Iberian Peninsula situating in between the Sierra Nevada Mountains, is isolated from the open coastal regions. As a result, certain coastal regions have tried to establish sovereign states. For example, Portugal, located on the western portion of the Iberian Peninsula, won its independence from Moorish Spain in 1143. Again, geography of the Basque region on the border of France and Spain led to regionalism, or a feeling of collective identity based on a population's politico-territorial identification within a state or across state boundaries, and eventually the Basque Separatist Movement. The majority of the region is located in Spain. The land is hilly, and allows the Basque population to have a distinctive culture and language. A few Spanish islands' locations also raise territorial debates. For example, because of the isolation of the Canary Islands off the coast of Africa, strong regionalism has evolved. In the 1960s, islanders who consider they to be gaucho natives have tried to win autonomy from Spain.

The Pyrenees and hilly features within Spain, with addition to its relative location with Africa, have generated centrifugal forces. However, the hilly features of Europe do provide protection from foreign invasions. They were asset of many civilizations in times of war. In times of peace, they only isolated nations from neighboring lands.