

The 18th June 2011: Another mass meeting to be held in Nantes for the reunification of Brittany.



Last mass meeting for reunification in Nantes 20.09.2008

Putting Brittany's reunification on the political agenda

Two Breton groups are intent on putting the issue of Breton reunification on the political agenda next June, by organising a mass meeting in the city of Nantes.

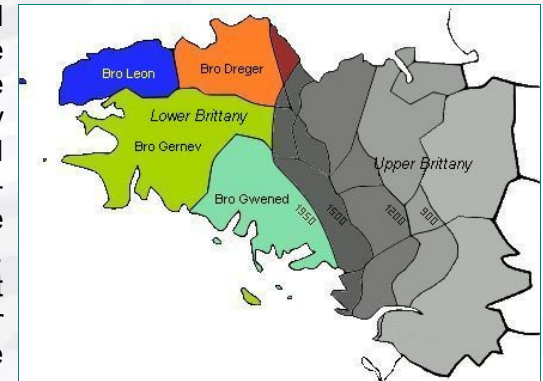
This particular Saturday (18th June 2011) people will be urged to travel to Nantes from all over Brittany to take part in a mass meeting. **"Bretagne Réunie"** and **"44=BZH"** want to show politicians that the issue of Breton reunification should be firmly on the political agenda ahead of next year's presidential and general elections.

The groups say that they are determined to get more political parties coming out in support of Breton reunification as part of their election campaign and want to start a debate on the issue in the run up to elections.

Some explanation about the problem

Brittany (Breton: Breizh; Gallo: Bertaèyn; French: Bretagne) is a cultural and administrative region in the north-west of France.

Languages: The two regional languages of Brittany still have no official status within the French state. Constrained by the constitution the regional authorities to give the languages some support but are limited in what they can do. Breton, strongest in the west but to be found all over Brittany, is a Celtic language most closely related to Cornish and Welsh. Gallo, which is spoken in the east, is one of the *Langues d'oïl* romance language group.



Government policies, which forbade speaking Breton in schools, along with the demands of education, pushed many non-French speakers to adopt the French language. Until the 1960s, Breton was spoken and understood by the majority of the inhabitants of western Brittany.

A Programme about the Breton language was shown on Al Jazeera (English). The programme said that in 'France' a battle to save a dying language is being carried out. Breton is spoken by about 200,000 people in France. 50-years-ago, it was nearly a million. Estelle Youssouffa presented the programme and tried to show that campaigners believe Breton will make a comeback (programme broadcast on 15 May 2010).

[Watch the programme here ...](#)

History (shortened):

During the 9th century the Bretons resisted incorporation into the Frankish Carolingian Empire. In 845 the Breton army under Nominoe defeated the forces of Charles the Bald, King of West Francia (France), at the Battle of Ballon. Nominoe gained control over the major towns of Rennes and Nantes, which had previously formed part of the Frankish border zone known as the "March of Brittany".

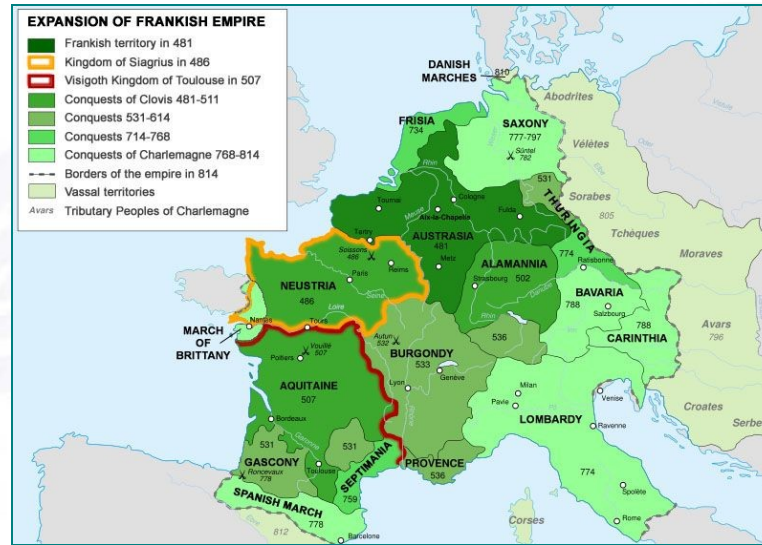
Control over Rennes, Nantes and the Pays de Retz was secured when the Frankish army was defeated once again in 851 at the Battle of Jengland by the Bretons under Erispoe; consequently Charles the Bald recognised the independence of Brittany and determined the borders that defined the historic duchy and later province.

Previously a kingdom and then a duchy, Brittany was annexed to the Kingdom of France in 1532. Brittany has also been referred to as Lesser or Little Britain (as opposed to Great Britain). It is characterized as one of the six Celtic nations.

After the French revolution in 1790, the historic province of Brittany was divided into five départements (an administrative division similar to a county): Finistère in the west, Côtes-du-Nord in the north, Ille-et-Vilaine in the north east, the Loire-Inférieure in the south east and Morbihan in the south on the Bay of Biscay.

In 1941, **France's Vichy regime split Brittany in two parts** and separated the Breton capital Nantes and its Loire-Inférieure *département* from the rest of Brittany.

In 1956, French Regions were created by gathering *départements* together. Since then the administrative Region of Brittany has been comprised of only four of the five original Breton *départements* (80% of historical Brittany). The remaining part of the historic Brittany, the Loire-Atlantique (former Loire-Inférieure) *département* around Nantes currently forms part of the artificial Pays de la Loire region. This territorial organisation has been strongly contested ever since.

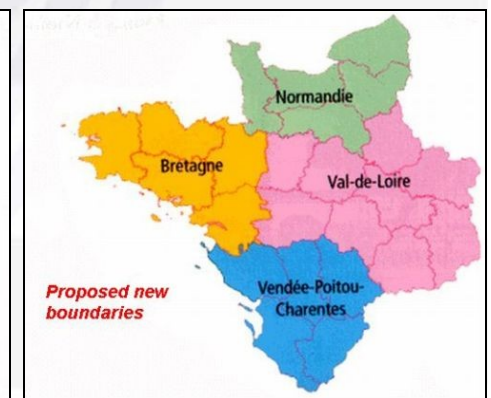
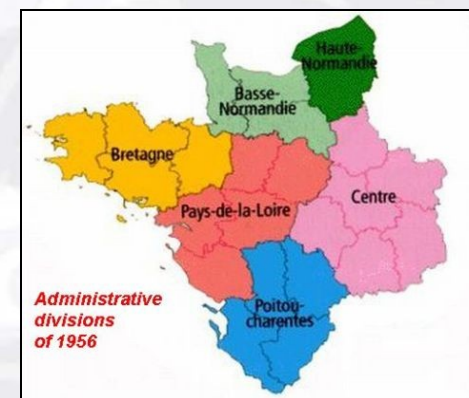


However it is a fact that Brittany was deliberately split into two parts in 1941 under **France's Vichy regime** and until now the debate about its future has been deliberately and endlessly stifled by the successive Presidents of the French Pays de la Loire region of which the Loire-Atlantique *département* is then part.

[Read more ...](#)

Geography: Brittany occupies a large peninsula in the north west of France, lying between the English Channel to the north and the Bay of Biscay to the south. Its land area is 34,023 km² (13,136 sq mi).

In January 2007 the population of historic Brittany was estimated to be 4,367,086. Of these, 71.45% lived in the administrative region of Brittany, while 28.55% lived in the administrative region of Pays-de-la-Loire. At the 2008 census, the largest metropolitan areas were Nantes (804,833 inhabitants), Rennes (580,961 inhabitants), and Brest (300,300 inhabitants).



Feelings of Bretons about the reunification

Opinion polls

Several opinion polls conducted in Loire-Atlantique in the recent past have shown a majority of votes in favour of reunification with Brittany.

1999 Yes 68 % of Loire-Atlantique inhabitants TMO poll for Ouest-France Dimanche

2000 Yes 71 % according an **Institut CSA** study

2001 Yes 75 % according to the **Ifop**

2001 Yes 63% according to a study of **ESRC UK**

2002 Yes 56 % according to the same council

2006 Yes 67 % according to the same council

([Economic and Social Research Council](#))

2009 Yes 64% according an **Institut CSA** study

Some Protests, Demonstrations and Actions

The Breton's Democratic Union (UDB) started a big campaign in November 2007 consisting of a massive poster campaign promoting the idea of a reunification. More than 100 billboards presented the following message to passing pedestrians and drivers: *Four strong regions instead of six weak ones.*



Sunday, March 21, 2010



The '*Fresque Humaine*' was a great success as can be seen from the aerial photo. 2000 citizens turned out to take part and to spell out, with their rain soaked bodies, that department 44, Loire-Atlantic, is part of Brittany.

44 = BZH



The Breton Regional Council and the departmental council of Loire Atlantique have both previously voted in favour of reunification (the Breton Regional Council have in fact voted for reunification three times) and every poll conducted in Loire Atlantique shows that the electorate are strongly in favour of the same.

A sense of local belonging

The question of the eastern border and of the reunification of Brittany must not be put in terms of perpetuating the past but rather the subjective building of identity. Everywhere in the world, today, people want to become the subjects of their life, rejecting more firmly establishment prescribed identities. Moreover, globalization leads to a new production of identity: groups reinvent their projects. According to Arjun Appadurai, "the task of producing locality is increasingly a struggle" because it is often opposed to the projects of the Nation-State themselves.



Democracy



What can the State do, vis-a-vis the production by citizens of a "structure of feeling" which does not correspond to its decisions? And what can the citizens do to concretize their aspirations? It is known that 66% of the inhabitants of Loire-Atlantique want a referendum to be held on this topic; however, the initiative of the referenda exclusively belongs to the State. Isn't this a central issue in reflexions on democracy today? According to David Held, the "decisive contribution to making the polity more democratic" today is to know "how can the requirements of

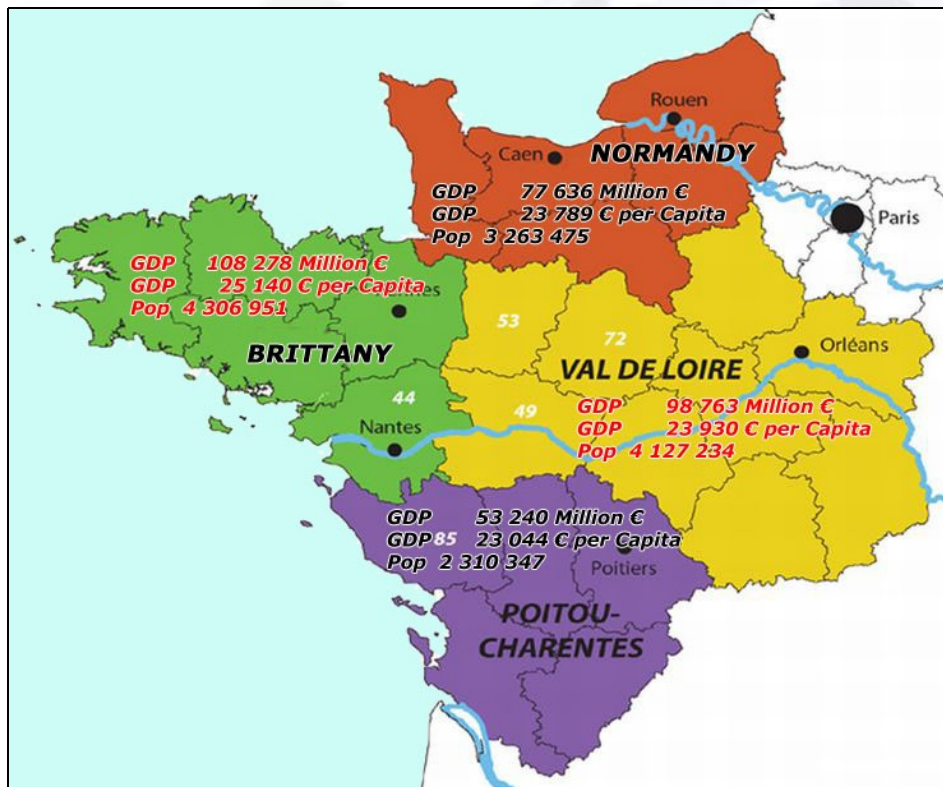
both a 'sovereign state' and a 'sovereign people' be met?". **This question is not even permitted to be posed in Brittany...**

Economic Benefits of Brittany's Reunification

Today (2005), the figures suggest that the GDP per capita of Loire-Atlantique and Ile-et-Vilaine are roughly 120 percent of the average level of Western Brittany. Low working population density and a high share of rural population are some of the main structural obstacles to higher productivity and growth in the West.

Rennes and Nantes, along with their satellite towns, are among the most densely populated areas. This has enabled them to develop core industries, spillovers, know-how and dynamic knowledge externalities. There is overwhelming evidence that differences in working population densities are an important factor in the divergence of growth between Western and Eastern Brittany.

Moreover the close economic relationship between these two eastern Breton cities and Paris is mainly to the benefit of the capital region instead of the western part of Brittany.



Gross domestic product (GDP) by department

			Year 2005			Population 2 005
			GDP million euros	GDP per capita in euros	GDP per job in euros	
Brittany	22	Côtes-d'Armor	12 046	21 179	56 903	568 771
Brittany	29	Finistère	21 221	24 094	62 043	880 759
Brittany	35	Ile-et-Vilaine	26 117	27 788	64 188	939 866
Brittany	44	Loire-Atlantique	33 493	27 310	65 842	1 226 401
Brittany	56	Morbihan	15 401	22 283	59 152	691 155
			108 278	25 140		4 306 951
Normandy	14	Calvados	15 890	23 724	59 656	669 786
Normandy	27	Eure	11 863	20 986	59 227	565 282
Normandy	50	Manche	10 706	21 767	56 588	491 845
Normandy	61	Orne	6 119	20 885	54 927	292 985
Normandy	76	Seine-Maritime	33 058	26 583	66 320	1 243 577
			77 636	23 789		3 263 475
Poitou	16	Charente	8 224	23 736	61 315	346 478
Poitou	17	Charente-Maritime	12 463	20 919	58 509	595 774
Poitou	79	Deux-Sèvres	8 957	24 984	61 319	358 509
Poitou	85	Vendée	13 927	23 500	57 775	592 638
Poitou	86	Vienne	9 669	23 190	59 306	416 947
			53 240	23 044		2 310 347
Val de Loire	18	Cher	7 008	22 272	59 048	314 655
Val de Loire	28	Eure-et-Loir	9 144	21 769	60 829	420 047
Val de Loire	36	Indre	4 811	20 667	53 276	232 787
Val de Loire	37	Indre-et-Loire	14 187	24 531	62 278	578 329
Val de Loire	41	Loir-et-Cher	7 322	22 575	56 615	324 341
Val de Loire	45	Loiret	18 449	28 681	68 534	643 248
Val de Loire	49	Maine-et-Loire	17 378	22 743	56 688	764 103
Val de Loire	53	Mayenne	7 065	23 713	56 957	297 938
Val de Loire	72	Sarthe	13 399	24 283	61 368	551 785
			98 763	23 930		4 127 234

But despite the long-standing and oft-noted rivalry between Rennes and Nantes, stronger and more complementary economic relationships between these two cities and the western part of Brittany would generate higher levels of sustainable economic growth and development.

Unfortunately, the obvious economic benefits of the reunification are rarely mentioned by the politicians or the media, all of whom focus only on possible negative outcomes – predicting that it would be unfair and unjust for the others Pays-de-la-Loire departments, that it would not work, that it would cost a lot of money and so forth. Nobody ever mentions the positive long term effects such as economic progress for Brittany.

Could it happen one day?

In September 2008, French President Nicolas Sarkozy announced: "The time has come to address the issue of the many layers of local government, for their overlapping responsibilities are a source of inefficiency and very high costs."

Former French Prime Minister Édouard Balladur was put in charge of the governmental Commission looking into slashing France's infamous administrative bureaucracy.

His conclusions, known as "The Balladur Report", suggested a cut back on local government by merging some of France's regions and reducing their number from 22 to 15. Initially, **Mr Balladur's draft report recommended that the Loire-Atlantique county should be reunited with Brittany.**

The report, made public on March 5th 2009, was a draft proposal for France's biggest administrative shake up since the Second World War.



However, the Mayor of Nantes and one of the French Parti Socialiste's main leaders, Jean-Marc Ayrault, who strongly opposes a merger with Brittany, ordered the Committee's two socialist officials to omit the Breton reunification proposal on the final report.

The Breton Regional Council, the departmental council of Loire-Atlantique, and a number of local councils have all previously voted in favour of reunification (the Breton Regional Council have in fact voted for reunification three times) and every poll conducted in Loire-Atlantique has shown that the electorate are strongly in favour of the same. Unfortunately, Mayor Ayrault and his Jacobin supporters, including the Mayor of Rennes, Daniel Delaveau, still believe that they can over rule any decision made in favour of reunification.

Such institutional reform could be discussed again by the central French Government in Paris, which could mean the reduction of the number of French regions from its current 22 to 15. This could mean that Loire-Atlantique (including Nantes) is finally reunited with Brittany, making it again into the historic territory it so rightly deserves to be and in accordance with international agreements.

Is France still a democracy in anything other than name?

Democracy is not just a matter of an individual casting a vote: it also depends on the ability of the individual voter to make legislative proposals in a relatively objective and legal way. That has palpably not been the case in France. Democracy depends also on a separation of political, technocratic and economic power. The growth of lobby interests in France since 1956 has significantly weakened that separation.

Is France still a democracy when the citizens have no input or actual say in when laws are passed or how the regional limits are defined?



Dictatorship is: shut your mouth
Democracy is: keep talking

UDB urges its activists to remain committed.

The Breton peoples must remain committed to support the efforts of the activists to achieve this strategic shift, and to reshape their country in order to put it on the path towards sustainable development..



Come in large numbers to Nantes on the 18/06/2011

UDB activists walk in a demonstration in the streets of Nantes (20/09/2008)