

Forum: Special Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4)

Issue: Question of Catalonia's claims for independence

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INTRODUCTION¹

The region of Catalonia is a wealthy part of Spain located in the west of the country, bordered by France to the north and the Mediterranean Sea to the east. The people of Catalonia have their own distinct language and identity and their long relationship with the rest of Spain is often very turbulent. During the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, both the Catalan language and the symbols of Catalan identity were banned from public life. After Spain's shift towards democracy, Catalonia was granted autonomy and a local government under the Statute of Sau. Still, in 2017, after an unofficial referendum, in which the overwhelming majority voted in favor of independence, Catalonia declared its independence from the Kingdom of Spain.



Image 1. A protester in Catalonia holding the Catalan flag

There are many reasons underlying the desire for Catalan independence. For one, Catalonia's different language and culture distance the region from the rest of Spain. Catalans are proud of their own rich heritage to an extent that has been characterized by some as nationalist. Also, many Catalans would point out the fact that Catalonia is the wealthiest region in Spain, which means that it has to pay a significant amount of taxes to the central government, which some claim could be better spent within Catalonia.

¹ Image 1: "When is the Catalonia independence referendum 2017? Will Catalonia vote to leave Spain?" Photograph. Barcelona. cdn.images.express.co.uk/img/dynamic/78/590x/hen-is-the-Catalonia-independence-referendum-860025.jpg.

However, there are many people in Catalonia who are opposed to the idea of an independent state. These people would claim that, for one, Spain is a significant trading partner for Catalonia. Almost half of Catalan exports were directed to Spain in 2012. Furthermore, by being an autonomous community of Spain, the region is an integral part of the EU, through which Catalonia gains a number of bonuses. Declaring an independent state would mean having to reapply for EU-Membership, an idea, which some are strictly opposed to. It should also be mentioned that many across Europe fear that an independent Catalonia would mark the beginning of a period of fracturing the European states, which could lead to conflict.

After the declaration of independence by Catalonia's Parliament, the central government in Madrid triggered Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution, which dismissed the regional autonomy of Catalonia and allowed for a number of Catalan politicians to be arrested and taken to court on a charge of treason. A series of cases of police brutality have brought international criticism to the Spanish government. Still, no member state of the United Nations has recognized Catalonia's independence. The question of Catalonia's claims to independence thus remains open.

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Independence

Independence can be defined as the freedom to legislate or make a decision without being governed or controlled by another country or organization. In effect, this definition entails that a state is independent when its government functions without answering to another body whatsoever.

Autonomy

Autonomy is defined as the ability of a region to decide freely about its regional affairs. However, in contrast to independence, autonomy does not exclude having to answer to a higher power in aspects, like foreign policy or military affairs.

Referendum

A referendum is a form of legislation adopted by many states at the national or local level, which allows the electorate to directly approve or reject an act of the government. The legality of a referendum may be challenged on constitutional grounds, on the grounds of not complying with proper procedures, or on the grounds of being outside the scope of authority granted by the state constitution to the body conducting

the referendum, if the latter is carried out by a regional authority. Referendums conducted by non-state parties are considered unofficial.

Self-determination

The concept of self-determination is defined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as the people's right to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development"². The approval of the right to self-determination is one of the purposes of the United Nations, as stated in Article 1 of the UN Charter. This concept was instrumental in the decolonization process and has also been applied in other instances. It is important to remember that self-determination outside the realm of colonization does not always equate to independence.

Generalitat de Catalunya³

The Generalitat of Catalonia was established in its current form in 2006 under the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia as "the institutional system around which Catalonia's self-government is politically organized"⁴. It is the regional government of Catalonia, whose powers emanate from the people of Catalonia and are exercised according to the Spanish Constitution. The Generalitat has historically been Catalonia's democratically elected government since the Middle Ages.



Image 2. The Logo of Catalonia's regional government

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The issue of Catalan independence is deeply rooted in a complex history of division, unification, and suppression. It is imperative to examine the history of Catalonia in order to understand the relationship between Catalonia and Spain and the context, in which Catalonia has declared independence from Spain. The Catalan declaration of independence has been met with significant criticism as to whether it is legal or not. The legality of Catalonia's independence will also need to be examined. Lastly, in trying to

² International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. United Nations, 1966. www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx.

³ Image 2: Logo of the Generalitat de Catalunya. www.inbenta.com/en/customers/generalitat-de-catalunya/.

⁴ Parlament de Catalunya (2012). Statute of Autonomy. Barcelona. https://web.gencat.cat/en/generalitat/estatut/estatut2006/titol_preliminar/

reach a conclusive solution to this issue, one must also examine similar cases of secessionist movements and how they have been resolved.

History of Catalonia

The establishment of an independent Catalonia⁵

The establishment of an independent Catalonia can be traced back to Charlemagne, who created the Marca Hispanica in the 8th century as a buffer state between his Carolingian empire and the rest of Spain. This region held significant civil and military autonomy but was still a vassal of France. Over time, the various counties of the region of Catalonia distanced themselves from France and became independent. The County of Barcelona became the most powerful and dominated the political landscape of Catalonia.



Image 3. The Marca Hispanica in the year 900

The Crown of Aragon⁶

In the year 1137, the County of Barcelona achieved a dynastic union with the landlocked Kingdom of Aragon, which lies to the west of Catalonia. The two states had different political systems but were ruled by the same monarch. Together they comprised the Crown of Aragon, which proceeded to expand militarily into the Mediterranean. During this time, the Catalan identity was established and became prevalent in the east of the Iberian Peninsula. Also, the Generalitat de Catalunya was first created during this time as a democratic assembly which dealt with the regional affairs of Catalonia.



Image 4. The expansion of the Crown of Aragon

⁵ Image 3: Catalonia, c.900. Map. edmaps.com/assets/images/catalan_counties_900.png.

⁶ Image 4: The Aragonese Expansion. Map. edmaps.com/assets/images/Aragonese_expansion_1400.png.

The Iberian Union and the dawn of the Catalan Independence movement

In 1469, King Ferdinand II of Aragon married Queen Isabella of Castile establishing a Union of two states. For many historians, this act is considered the birth of the Kingdom of Spain, even though the Crown of Aragon and Castile functioned largely independently. The marginalization of Catalonia within Spain leads the Catalans to uprising in 1640, when the population of Catalonia revolted with the support of France against Spanish rule. The revolt lasted 12 years and ended with the successful siege of Barcelona by the Castilians. The Spanish monarchy decided to uphold the Catalan institutions and provide amnesty to the rebels in order to solidify its control over Catalonia. This revolt is considered to be the beginning of the Catalan independence movement.

The War of the Spanish succession⁷



Image 5. Europe during the War of the Spanish Succession

Until the Habsburg dynasty in Spain went extinct, the Spanish government attempted to centralize and gain more control over the states of the Crown of Aragon, including Catalonia. In 1701, the War of the Spanish Succession began with the Spanish throne being contested by a French and an Austrian noble. The states of the Crown of Aragon supported Archduke Charles of Austria, who ended

up losing the throne to the French Candidate, which resulted in the disbanding of the Generalitat by the central government and the integration of the region into the Crown of Aragon. This integration is viewed as the end of Catalan independence.

Catalonia in the 19th and the early 20th century

In the 19th century, a series of unsuccessful revolts took place in Catalonia. Still, the 19th century saw the increasing industrialization of Catalonia. In the meantime, the rest of Spain remained largely agrarian. After the failure of the First Spanish Republic in 1874, a political movement, known as Catalanism, began to take shape, with the first

⁷ Image 5: "The War of the Spanish Succession." Map. preview.redd.it/dnv8sxkg45m21.jpg?width=960&crop=smart&auto=webp&s=ffa4933e15c719e21dd3fe602215d2ddb6f4987.

Catalanist political parties appearing at the dawn of the 20th century. By 1931, the Catalan movement had achieved the recognition of Catalan autonomy and the restoration of the Generalitat, which had been dissolved back in 1716. In 1936, the political turmoil led to the Spanish Civil War, with the nationalist forces of General Franco rising up in open revolt against the Republican Government.

The Spanish Civil War and the Franco Dictatorship⁸

During the Spanish Civil War, Catalonia sided with the Republican Government against the Fascist dictatorship. The Republican Government, whose cause was largely aided by communist and anarchist forces within Catalonia, received support from the Soviet Union, but ultimately fell to Franco forces in 1939. The civil war saw as many as 1 million people die. The Fascist dictatorship disbanded the Generalitat, banned the use of the Catalan language in public spaces and schools, as well as any symbols of the Catalan identity, like the Catalan flag or even Catalan first names. Those who violated these policies or criticized the regime were met with violent crackdown. With the death of Francisco Franco in 1975, Spain began its transition towards democracy. The Statute of Sau between Catalonia and the central government restored the Generalitat in its current form and recognized Catalonia as an autonomous community of Spain, with Catalan being recognized as an official language of the region.



Image 6. A poster of the Republican Army in Catalonia, advocating an offensive to retake the Basque Country.

The 2006 Statute of Autonomy

The 1979 Statute of Sau was reexamined in 2006. The revised Statute of Autonomy granted the Generalitat increased powers and allowed Catalonia to gain increased control over part of its finances. Particularly, the preamble of the revised Statute uses the word “nation” to describe Catalonia. However, many criticized the Statute for not providing enough autonomy to Catalonia. Four years after its approval, Spain’s Constitutional Court issued a landmark ruling that made alterations to the 2006 Statute of Autonomy. Out of the 223 articles of the Statute, 14 were rejected and 27 were altered. Most notably, the Court observed that the references to Catalonia as a “nation” had no legal effect. The ruling sparked massive protests in Catalonia and set the stage for an independence referendum to take place.

⁸ Image 6: Ofensiva per a Euzkadi. Poster. Biblioteca Nacional de España, 2.bp.blogspot.com/-rWtrRx6S9_k/UR_uyJ2iczl/AAAAAAAAACV0/9zcHqUwNg60/s1600/Ofensiva+per+a+Euzkadi.tif.

The Declaration of Independence⁹

In 2009, the economic crisis amplified calls for an independent Catalonia. Between 2009 and 2017, a series of informal independence referendums were held in many towns and cities of Catalonia, including Barcelona. The central government never recognized these referendums, seeing as the Spanish Constitution allows only the



Image 7. Catalan protestors clash with Spanish riot police outside a polling station.

central government to conduct such referendums. Because of this, many people supporting unity with Spain embargoed the referendums, with the most recent one in 2017 having only a voter turnout of 45%. In October of the same year, the President of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont, signed a declaration of Catalan independence, much to the dismay of the central government. In response, the central government approved the direct rule of Catalonia by triggering Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution. The following government crackdown has seen many

politicians arrested and put to trial in the Supreme Court on treason charges. Protests both in favor and against independence have persisted long after the declaration of independence. A series of instances of police brutality have brought international criticism to the government in Madrid. A number of UN experts have openly criticized the Spanish government and demanded that the fundamental rights of Catalans be upheld. President Puigdemont fled Catalonia to Brussels and Germany. The Spanish government has sought his extradition on the grounds of rebellion and misuse of public funds. On 2 June 2018, Article 155 was revoked and a new Catalan government under Quim Torra was sworn in.

Legality of the Catalan Declaration of Independence

Legal experts have voiced differing opinions regarding the declaration of independence of Catalonia, which was approved in the Generalitat de Catalunya on 27 October 2017. When trying to answer the question of whether this declaration of independence is legal or not, one must first differentiate between Spanish and international law.

⁹ Image 7: Vera, Susana. Riot police face off with demonstrators outside a polling station for the banned independence referendum in Barcelona. Reuters, 1 Oct. 2017, www.macleans.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/RTS1ELL9.jpg.

The Section 2 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978, which is the present Constitution of Spain, does not allow any of the regions of Spain to secede from the country. In that sense, the dismissal of the declaration of independence by the Spanish government was to be expected.

When it comes to international law, the 2017 declaration of independence does not seem to have clear legal backing. In general, the most widely accepted way for a region to become independent is when the parent state recognizes the independence of the seceding country. An example of this would be the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and the creation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. Seeing as the Spanish government does not agree with Catalan independence, this principle does not apply to Catalonia.

A different approach to examining the international legality of Catalonia's secession from Spain pertains to Catalonia's right to self-determination. However, self-determination outside the realm of colonization is not a well-established field. In general, alien subjugation, domination, and exploitation constitute legal grounds, on which a region can secede from another state. These do not apply to the case of Catalonia, a prosperous and autonomous region that has its own government. One could argue that through the recent events in Catalonia (the numerous arrests and cases of police brutality), and if these trends continue, the independence of Catalonia could be justified. However, self-determination does not equal the right to being independent. In effect, Catalonia's autonomy under the Statute of Autonomy could mean that the right to self-determination is satisfied.

A core principle of international law is that a state's constitutional law needs to be in agreement with international law in order to be considered legal. This could mean that if there was a clear international framework for Catalonia to gain independence, the international community could consider Catalonia's independence legal without Spain's consent. Inasmuch as there is no such framework at present, the international community is unable to agree on whether Catalonia's declaration of independence is legal or not.

In the end, it may not matter so much whether this declaration of independence is legal or not. Even if Catalonia's secession from Spain is something the international community would agree with, the Catalans would still need to reach an agreement with the central government in Madrid in order to peacefully achieve their independence.

Case Studies

In trying to answer the question of Catalonia's claims to independence, it is imperative to take into consideration similar cases of independence movements. The purpose of these case studies is to highlight how such issues have been resolved in the past and discover whether there is a precedent for the case of Catalonia.

Scotland and the United Kingdom¹⁰

Scotland and Catalonia are both parts of larger political entities, the United Kingdom and Spain respectively, which have long-standing independence movements. While the relations between Scotland and the United Kingdom (UK) have never been cordial, the United Kingdom's devolution in 1999, during which the Scottish Parliament was restored, helped the two parties restore good relations. Still, in the year 2014, an official independence referendum was held, which, in contrast to the referendum in Catalonia, had the backing of the UK government. Because of this, the voter turnout in Scotland was as high as 85%, while the referendum in Catalonia only saw a 45% voter turnout. The people of Scotland voted to remain in the UK. However, after Scotland overwhelmingly voted to remain in the EU during the Brexit vote, while the overall majority in the UK voted to leave, the Scottish First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, supported holding a new independence referendum.

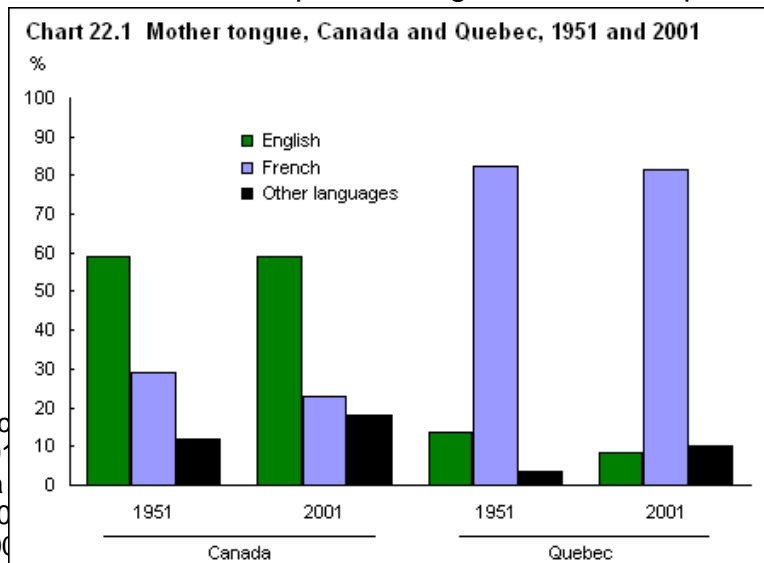


Image 8. The question of Catalan independence is often compared to the Scottish independence movement.

Quebec and Canada¹¹

Quebec is a Canadian province which was colonized by the French in the 14th and 15th century and was handed over to the British in 1760. The population in Quebec still largely speaks French and is culturally separated from the rest of Canada. The Quebecois independence movement reached its peak during the 1995 independence referendum when 49.42% of the population voted to pursue independence, while 50.58% voted to remain in Canada.

With such a close vote on independence, the Supreme Court of Canada



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1951 and 2001.

Image 9. The Mother tongue of people in Quebec and Canada as a whole in the years 1951 and 2001

¹⁰ Image 8: Scotland and Catalonia at thecorner.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Scotland-and-Catalonia.jpg

¹¹ Image 9: Mother Tongue, Canada Population, 1951 and 2001, www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/92-627-x/2007/50000/grafx/img/extra/ceb5000001-eng.htm

reached a landmark verdict, in which it interpreted self-determination as only applicable in the context of colonialism.

Despite nullifying the request for Quebecois self-determination, the Court also proceeded to interpret the Constitution of Canada beyond its formal reading and claimed that, if there were a clear Quebecois majority for independence, the government of Canada would need to heed the democratic principles that underlie the Constitution and initiate negotiations.

This verdict by the Canadian Supreme Court had far-reaching effects in Quebecois society. As a result, the desire for independence in Quebec has drastically decreased. Even the Prime Minister of Spain, Pedro Sánchez, has claimed that Quebec could be a model for reaching a solution to the issue of Catalonia.

The Basque Country and Spain

The Basque Country is an autonomous community of Spain with a unique ethnicity and language. Much like Catalonia, the Basque Country has a long-standing independence movement. During the Franco dictatorship, a militant group by the name of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) was founded and committed many assassinations of politicians, soldiers, and civilians, causing havoc and fear among the general population. Even after the fall of the regime and after Madrid granted the Basque Country the task of setting and collecting their own taxes, the ETA continued to commit assassinations trying to advocate Basque independence. Finally, in 2010, the ETA announced through a statement, that it would halt its offensive military action. At present, the independence movement in the Basque country has limited support but has seen increasing growth.

The violence in the Basque Country is a stark reminder of the fact that independence movements, like Catalonia's, can always turn violent, if both sides mismanage the situation.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Spain

Inasmuch as Catalonia is currently an autonomous community of the Kingdom of Spain, the Spanish government is directly involved in the issue of Catalan independence. Bearing in mind that Catalonia is one of the richest regions of the country, Madrid receives a significant amount of its revenue from Catalonia. After the Catalan declaration of independence, Spain put Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution into effect, thereby establishing direct control over the region, which lasted 8 months. Police forces of the Spanish government have used excessive violence to suppress the

independence movement in Catalonia. Also, a number of Catalan public officials have been arrested and brought to trial on charges of rebellion and sedition.

European Union (EU)

The European Union has refrained from taking an active stance on Catalonia's independence, seeing as it considers this issue to be a domestic one. The European Union understandably fears the fragmentation of its member states and thus cannot support unilateral Catalan independence. If Catalonia were to become independent, it would need to reapply for EU Membership. After the recent EU-Elections, several Catalan members of parliament, who were involved in the 2017 declaration of independence, have been denied access to the European Parliament.

Belgium

After the declaration of independence in Catalonia, the ex-President of Catalonia and four ex-ministers have fled to Belgium. The Belgian autonomous region of Flanders has welcomed them and openly criticized Spain for its mistreatment of the issue of Catalonia. However, the central government has refrained from voicing such criticism.

Germany

German police stopped Carles Puigdemont after he crossed the border by car from Denmark on his way back to Belgium. The Spanish authorities had issued a European arrest order on charges of rebellion and misuse of public funds and demanded his extradition. The higher court in Schleswig-Holstein authorized Puigdemont's extradition to Spain on the grounds of misuse of public funds, but not on charges of rebellion. This means that Carles Puigdemont cannot be judged in Spain on the grounds of rebellion.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
1137 CE	The County of Barcelona entered a dynastic union with the landlocked Kingdom of Aragon. The two would proceed to conquer parts of Spain and islands in the Western Mediterranean while allowing the Catalan identity to take form.

1469 CE	King Ferdinand II of Aragon married Queen Isabella of Castile and established a Union of the two states, thereby creating the Kingdom of Spain.
1640 CE	The population of Catalonia openly revolted against Spanish rule with the support of France.
1716 CE	The War of the Spanish Succession ended for revolting Catalonia after the Siege of Barcelona with the dissolution of the Generalitat de Catalunya and the establishment of Spanish dominance.
1931 CE	After the fall of the Spanish monarchy, the Generalitat was restored and Catalonia was granted autonomy.
1936 CE	Spanish nationalist forces, led by General Francisco Franco, openly revolted against the Republican government. This signaled the beginning of Fascist rule in Spain, during which Catalonia was suppressed.
1979 CE	The Statute of Sau between Catalonia and the central government restored the Generalitat in its current form and recognized Catalonia's autonomy and language.
2006 CE	The revised Statute of Autonomy granted the Generalitat increased powers and allowed Catalonia to gain increased control over its finances.
2010 CE	The Constitutional Court in Madrid struck down part of the 2006 Statute of Autonomy causing outrage in much of Catalonia.
2017 CE	Voters in an independence referendum backed separation from Spain with the government declaring independence. The central government in Madrid activated Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution and imposed direct rule over Catalonia.
2018 CE	Article 155 was revoked in June. After elections in Catalonia, Quim Torra became the head of the Catalan government. In the meantime, Mariano Rajoy was ousted on allegations of corruption. The more moderate Pedro Sánchez has taken office as Prime Minister of Spain.
2019 CE	Twelve Catalan leaders stood trial in the Spanish Supreme Court on their roles in the declaration of independence. The verdict is expected in October 2019.

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is an international human rights agreement, which was adopted and opened for signature by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966. It entered into force on 23 March 1976 in accordance with Article 49 of the Covenant. The states that signed the Covenant have committed themselves to respecting civil and political rights listed in the Covenant, amongst which the right to self-determination. Nearly every country in the world, Spain included, has ratified the Covenant.

2006 Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia

The 2006 Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia is a revised version of the 1979 Statute of Saub which enlarged the powers of the Generalitat de Catalunya and allowed Catalan government increased control in the realm of finances. Still, a large part of Catalonia's taxation was to remain under the control of the central government. In 2010, the Constitutional Court of Spain struck down and altered parts of the 2006 Statute of Autonomy. Most notably, the references to Catalonia as a "nation" in the preamble were interpreted as having no legal effect.

The Independence Referendum of 2017

The Independence Referendum of 2017 was passed by the Parliament of Catalonia as the Law on the Referendum on Self-determination of Catalonia and then conducted on 1 October 2017. The vote resulted in a 90% vote in favor of independence, even though the voter turnout was as little as 45%. The Spanish Constitutional Court dismissed the referendum as illegal since the Constitution only allows the central government to conduct such a referendum.

Article 155 of the 1978 Spanish Constitution

Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution allows the central government to take direct control of the autonomous communities, if these violate their obligations to the Spanish Constitution. This Article was triggered by the Spanish government following the Catalan declaration of independence and revoked eight months later.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Due to the fact that the Catalan declaration of independence is relatively new, there have not yet been any major moves to try to resolve the issue by neither of the two sides. However, it should be noted that a change in Spain and Catalonia's governments has signaled an increased desire for negotiations. Both the Spanish and the Catalan Premiers have changed, with Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy being replaced by Pedro Sánchez due to charges of corruption, and Carles Puigdemont being replaced by Quim Torra. The two men appear to be more willing to negotiate, even though no meeting has taken place between them yet.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

In trying to come up with possible solutions to the issue of Catalan independence, one must always bear in mind the danger that the current public uproar in Catalonia may turn to violence. As in the case of Basques, the violence was detrimental to both parties, but most importantly to the population. Both parties will need to take this risk very seriously and act accordingly. In the short term, confidence-building measures between the two parties, like meetings and declarations that highlight the good faith of both parties, are essential to maintain peace and stability in the region.

It is important that one must keep in mind that it remains uncertain whether there is a clear majority in favor of independence in Catalonia. The most recent referendum was embargoed by those against Catalan independence. It would perhaps be prudent that an official referendum on Catalonia's secession from Spain will take place. This would require the political will of the Spanish government and Parliament, which is currently absent. However, if the central government and Parliament were willing to organize an official referendum in Catalonia, they could overcome the Constitution's prohibition of the secession of administrative regions, by asking the people of Catalonia whether they would be in favor of Constitutional reform, which would then allow for their secession. If there were a clear majority in favor of independence in Catalonia and if the central government were willing to let the region free, they could reform the Constitution and allow Catalonia to legally secede in a way that would guarantee its international recognition.

It is clear that there is a legal path for Catalonia to gain independence. However, this presupposes the political will of both the people of Catalonia and the Spanish government. It becomes evident that the issue is not so much legal as it is political. The true question here is whether Spain and Catalonia want to separate peacefully and legally. It is safe to presume that Spain will not easily let Catalonia free in fear that other regions, like the Basque Country and Andalusia, will also seek independence.

The role of the international community in trying to resolve this issue can be that of a mediator. The international community must find a way to balance Catalonia's

desire for independence and Spain's national integrity. The United Nations have a long history of assisting negotiations and helping to solve regional and international issues. Organizations, like the UN and the EU, can provide much needed assistance in helping both parties reach a conclusion.

It is certain that the way of resolving the Catalan issue will set an important precedent for other independence movements across Europe. Bavaria, Flanders, Scotland and Lombardy are closely watching Catalonia in order to learn how they will achieve their own independence. Dealing properly with the Catalan independence movement could create a precedent for other such movements all across Europe.

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