

Committee: The General Assembly 4

Issue: The Question of Catalanian Independence

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Introduction

Catalonia, an autonomous state of Spain, has had increasing political tensions with the Kingdom of Spain itself, concerning Catalonia's heightening demand to become an independent nation. A region located on the east side of Spain, Catalonia holds a long regional history and has been functioning as an autonomous community with Barcelona since 2006, holding Barcelona as its capital. However, due to not only political matters but also social conflicts, the populous state has undergone various disputes with the national government. The independence movement has also stirred responses from neighboring countries, causing the issue an urgent matter to be resolved to ease strained relationships throughout Europe as a whole.



Caption #1: Location of Catalonia on the map

Definition of Key Terms

Catalan

Catalan is the main spoken language in Catalonia. Although many people confuse Catalan to be a certain dialect of Spanish, Catalan actually carries dominant Latin roots, differing it from the language spoken throughout the rest of the country.

Francisco Franco

Francisco Franco was the brutal dictator who ruled Spain from 1939 to 1975, forcefully seizing power and self-appointing himself as the new leader. During Franco's rule, after he won the

citizen-lead revolt, Franco attempted to create a solid regime which critically affected Catalonia's culture.

Commonwealth

A commonwealth refers to independent communities or countries that usually form through the unification of neighboring regions to create a collective political system.

Revolutionary Catalonia

Revolutionary Catalonia (1936 - 1939) refers to the period of Catalonia under socialist governing.

Great Spanish Depression

The Great Spanish Depression began in 2008, when Spain fell into a serious economic crisis due to irreversible debt in the financial sector the nation. The economic crisis caused detrimental effects to the country and all the citizens suffered due to high unemployment rates and soaring tax rates.

Referendum

A referendum is a vote by a certain regional population regarding a single question with need of a decision. Catalonia has passed various referendums in the recent years, especially those of 2006 and 2017, regarding Catalonia's independence.

Autonomy

An autonomy is a region or district that has the authority to self-govern, however, still remains under the broader rule of a national government. After the 2006 Referendum regarding Catalonia's autonomy, with the majority of the votes, Catalonia was appointed to have a self-government.

Law on the Referendum on Self-determination of Catalonia

The Law on the Referendum on Self-determination of Catalonia, passed on October 6th, 2017, refers to the law approved by the Catalan government declaring Catalonia an independent republic.

Background Information

History of Catalonia

Although Catalonia does share a certain amount of history with the Spanish Kingdom, Catalonia also carries prominent history as an independent region, which has stemmed various elements of conflict between the two powers.

Industrialization

As the industrialization movement boomed in the 19th century, Catalonia made rapid industrial developments, allowing the region to quickly emerge as one of the largest hubs of trade and work opportunity. During this critical period of development, Catalonia saw revolutionary change particularly to the large city of Barcelona, which led to not only immense economic growth but also vital social growth within the region. As Catalan society grew, the region was able to construct its first commonwealth in 1914.

Francoist Catalonia

Under Franco's harsh dictatorial rule in 1939, Catalonia suffered inerasable cultural scars. For Franco's rule occurred under forceful seizure, he put all efforts into turning the nation into a military-like regime. At the time, Revolutionary Catalonia, undergoes heavy cultural suppression, for Franco attempts to reinforce totalitarian aspects by replacing diverse cultures with one single culture. The regime was particularly anti-Catalan, due to Catalonia's strong independent colors, leading to Franco removing the remainder of the government of Revolutionary Catalonia, along with replacing the Catalan language with Castilian. This prolonged suppression left a bitter resentment within the minds of many Catalonians.

Restoration of Catalonia

After Franco's rule ended in 1975, Catalonia once again voted to find its own autonomy and bring back a government like Revolutionary Catalonia that existed before Francoist Catalonia. As a result, Catalonia showed remarkable growth to returning to its originally flourishing economy and once more was recognized to be an international hub of trade.

Reason for independence

However the economy was restored in the late 20th century, acting as the spark for heightened demand for Catalanian independence from Spain.

Contrasting economy of Spain and Catalonia

Along with a handful of other European nations, Spain also was a victim of the Eurozone Debt Crisis in 2009 which led to a serious economic downfall throughout Spain, the Great Spanish Depression. However, in comparison to Spanish economy which has still not recovered

from the recent plight, only the Catalanian economy remains to thrive. Economists have measured that in 2013, Catalonia's GDP per capita was "23% above the average of Spain" and "17% above the European Union average". However, due to being a part of a larger nation, the Spanish national government inevitably turned to Catalonia's funds to mend the falling economy, which Catalonians have angrily responded to. This process lead many Catalonians to question the reason to remain as an autonomy of Spain and strengthened the demand to become an independent country as whole.

Limitations on the Autonomy

In 2010, Catalonia held a large scale protest against the national government due to discontent towards the amount of freedom the Catalonia was receiving and the national government's decision to revise certain articles of Catalonia's previous statute of independence. Furthermore in 2012, Catalonia held a large protest on its National Day, making its first explicit call for complete independence.

Independence Movements

2014 Referendum

After the 2010 and 2012 protests, Catalonia launched a serious movement for independence. In 2014, the Catalanian government released an official referendum composed of two questions asking, "Do you want Catalonia to become a state" and "Do you want this state to be independent?". However, ironically unlike the heated protests, only 42% voted "Yes" to both questions causing the referendum not to pass. Thus, the national government placed charges against Artur Mas, who was the president of Catalonia.

2017 Referendum

Recently Catalonia has once more stirred strong pro-independence movements through the 2017 Referendum. Unlike the 2014 Referendum, the 2017 Catalan Independence Referendum simply asked the Catalanian citizens one question: whether they "wanted Catalonia to become an independent state in the form of a republic". This time, with 92.01% of the votes for and 7.99% against independence, the pro-independence side takes the majority of the votes.

Aftermath of the 2017 Referendum

Once the results of the 2017 Referendum were officially declared, the Catalan government immediately moved to pass the Law on the Referendum on Self-determination of Catalonia. However, barely after 24 hours, the Spanish national government suspended the passed law, calling it a violation of the autonomy regulations of Catalonia. Furthermore, the

Spanish police exerted harsh suppression of any continued voting on the further referendum of October 1st, 2017. In spite of the fierce support towards pro-independence, the last referendum results were not in favor of independence, leaving Catalonia's stance in the haze.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
April 6, 1914	The first commonwealth of Catalonia is established by the combination of four neighboring regions.
1939	Franco's totalitarian rule takes force throughout Spain.
1975	The Catalan economy begins to thrive once more after being released from Franco's rule.
2008-2009	The Great Spanish Depression begins; the Spanish economy is thrown into chaos.
July 10, 2010	The 2010 Catalan Autonomy Protest takes place to challenge restrictions of the autonomy.
September 11, 2012	The 2012 Catalan Independence Demonstration takes place which is the first explicit expression of full independence.
November 9, 2014	The 2014 Independence Referendum occurs but does not pass.
October 1, 2017	The 2017 Independence Referendum occurs and passes.
October 6, 2017	The Law on the Referendum of Self-determination of Catalonia is passed.
October 7, 2017	The Law on the Referendum of Self-determination of Catalonia is suspended and noted to be an illegal act.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

UN Involvement

Although the United Nations has not directly involved itself in any part of the Catalan Independence Movement, the UN has condemned Spain for its rather violent shutdown of the 2017 Referendum voting. Especially, the UN Human Rights Council has been concerned over this particular

issue and has warned the nation to not only respect the rights of its citizens, but also to not start any violent dispute between the conflicting parties.

Other Countries' Stances

The UN Security Council's permanent five members have also made their statements regarding the political dispute of Spain and Catalonia. The opinions of the five countries lie closely alike as they similarly state the crisis to be a "domestic affair" of Spain and wishes to leave Spain to dictate its own solutions to the conflict. However, the United Kingdom and the United States, mentioned that they wish to see Spain remain as a single country and will not recognize Catalonia's independence. The other nations opinions concur with the ideas of wishing to support the conclusions of Spain's decision as a country or to not acknowledge Catalonian declaration independence as a whole. Explicitly countries such as Belgium, Hungary, Croatia, Poland, Vietnam, and Estonia have concurred with the first opinion, whilst countries such as Canada, Germany, Italy, Indonesia, Ireland, Brazil, and Norway have concurred with the second opinion.

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