

Catalonia's Ambition for Independence in the 21st Century

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Abstract

Alongside the recent formation of supranational organizations, like the European Union, has come the resurgence of peripheral nationalisms, including independentist movements in Scotland, Wallonia, and the Basque Country. Catalonia is one such independentist movement which has originated from the long history of struggle with the Spanish government over differences in language and culture. Despite there being many reasons to support their desire for sovereignty, including years of repression under Francisco Franco and a Supreme Court reversal on the Statute of Autonomy, the movement has garnered minimal legislative results. Currently, the movement is at a dead end until leadership is able to determine the next course of action. Using a comprehensive literature review, the present study will determine how new nations can develop in the modern era by compiling a list of factors that justify independence. Knowing these factors can help generate a list of guidelines to help independence movements formulate a specific plan to reach their goals while avoiding violent conflict.

Introduction

In recent years, the European Union has been trying to establish an inclusive identity that advocates for unity based on self-described values. The goal is to dismantle the walls that separate Europeans and fortify their collective strength (Müller, 2008). With this in mind, there remain hurdles that impede this vision. The resurgence of nation-focused movements like Brexit and peripheral nationalist movements occurring in regions like Scotland call into question the viability of the European project. These groups of people have chosen to define themselves outside affiliation with the larger groups that they are a part of, and at the origin of these visions are the communities' cultural roots (Suriñach and Dentinho, 2019, p. 759).

To focus on an exemplary case, Catalonia, a region of Spain with its own language and customs, serves as a prime case study of the struggles of different national groups to find their place in Europe's supranational identity. In October 2017, the region held an illegal referendum that called for secession from the country in order to rule over people of their own culture and identity. The result was over 90% of people voting for separation, but voter turnout was only about 43% (BBC, 2019). The European Union's stance on the situation was that they would not recognize Catalonia's independence due to the illegal nature of the vote; other countries, including the United States and Russia, agreed and stated that they would prefer that Catalonia remain unified with Spain. As such, the autonomous community ended up directly under Spanish rule in the months following the incident so that order could be re-established, without sovereignty having been achieved. As international law does not require countries to recognize other states, it brings to question how national independence can be achieved in the 21st century. The topic is worthy of investigation because Catalonia is one of many regions in the world, let

alone in Europe, that wants to separate from its country of origin under the idea of self-determination. However, it is not easy for a new nation to develop in the modern world, considering only five new sovereign states have gained worldwide recognition in the past two decades.

As part of the study, a wide range of academic monographs and articles were consulted to help guide the natural progression of this extensive literature review. First, the research will examine the origins of Catalan culture and collectivism, before delving deeper into some of the important moments in Catalonia's past that have shaped the current situation. The focus will then shift to the date of the illegal referendum, and consider what went right and wrong during the crisis and the aftermath that followed it. To end off the exploration, a broader perspective will be taken to investigate the purpose of intergovernmental organizations in situations such as these, and what this case study signifies for any other current or future independence movements in Spain, Europe, and the world.

Cultural Origins

As a brief aside, it is important to note that Catalonia has always had its own culture and language separate from the rest of Spain. Starting in the medieval times, they were being ruled by people of a different identity. Catalonia became linked into the whole Kingdom of Spain when Ramon Berenguer IV from Barcelona married Petronilla of Aragon (Williams, 2018, p. 44). It expanded further when Fernando II of Catalan-Aragon married Isabella of Castile (Castile is a region in Spain whose dialect eventually became the standard Spanish language spoken in the country). As the government started to modernize, those regions remained a central part of the country (Williams, 2018, p. 46). However, the marriages were the only connections between the Catalans and Castilians, for today, there still lies a distinct difference between the two identities.

During the Middle Ages and conquest era, there was a bigger emphasis on the greater Spanish identity than on one's communal identity. At a time where individual identity had not been linked to the political will of the people, order was established based on following the set of rules and lifestyles that the Kingdom promoted (Hillgarth, 1978, p. 271). Like many other European nations at the time, these lifestyles were based on nationalist ideals; no matter what your background was, you were a resident of Spain and thus, you should act Spanish. This led to some of the earliest instances of conflict between the Spanish king and the Catalan people.

One instance of a mismatch between Spanish and Catalan wishes occurred during the modern era wars. Spain had fought in European wars with neighboring countries such as in the Thirty Years War and the Franco-Spanish War. To keep the border with France in check, the Spanish government had troops stationed in Catalonia. Alongside that, the government taxed

Catalans in order to increase revenue for the Crown and the army (Sauret, 2020). These displeasures led to Catalonia's first major rebellion, the Reaper's War, also known as the Catalan Revolt. This war pitted rich against poor, and Castilian against Catalan. While initially the Catalans had help from the French, they eventually pulled out, making it easy for the Spanish crown to crush the rebellion, especially when the Catalan noblemen were seeking forgiveness from the Castilian monarch. The common Catalan person, in one of their first instances in fighting for their own identity, had been betrayed socially and economically from their nation, their neighbors, and their own people. It would not be the end of unfairness thrown their way, but for the time being, the Spanish government led by Philip IV issued an amnesty, allowing Catalonia to keep its laws and rights instead of relinquishing all power to the central government (Sauret, 2020), a generous act that was never repeated in Catalan's history.

As Spain begins approaching the late modern era, Catalonia does get its chance to shine during the beginning of the 19th century. Throughout Europe, Romanticism spread, which focused its attention on emotion, the natural world, and most importantly to Catalonia, individualism. In this artistic movement, one's culture was not only allowed to be shown off, it was encouraged. Leading up to this revival, Catalan language and overall culture had been on the decline, with Spain trying to promote its Castilian culture. With encouragement from the Catalan poets and writers who had started using the beauty of their past language in their contemporary writings, the region underwent its own movement known as *Renaixença*, or the Catalan Renaissance (Minder, 2017, pg. 30). Catalan strength was reborn through the use of culture in art, theater, and literature. It was a dormant proudness given new life, and it is this energy that still thrives in the hearts of Catalans to this day.

Though Catalonia did not have the greatest start in its incorporation within the Spanish state, over the course of many years, the people were eventually able to find themselves and their culture amongst the heavy Spanish influence that had surrounded them. Despite the political ups and downs, Catalan identity remained strong and gained a sense of resilience as one of its signature traits. Even the Catalan bourgeoisie, who may have gone to the Spanish crown looking for forgiveness a few times, never abandoned Catalan as their main language, unlike the elite from other autonomous regions by this time - namely Galicia and Valencia - who had opted to express themselves in the Castilian language instead of their native tongue. This was the start of a modern Catalan identity, one that would continue to be challenged until the present day.

History of Catalonia Under Franco's Rule

The Reaper's War was only a small glimpse into the future conflict Catalonia would face against the Spanish central government. In 1936, the conservatives and sections of the army rebelled against the democratically elected government of the second Spanish republic, in what would be the start of the Spanish Civil War. The government was supported by many individuals, including Soviet officials abroad, fighters from the Basque region, and the Catalan army. Even though the government at the time did not fully support Catalonia's culture, a regime led by Francisco Franco, the leader of the Nationalist army, would mean complete suppression of the Catalans' freedom, giving purpose for fighting in this cause. The war lasted for over two and a half years, before Franco won and took over the government. His rule would be harsh and strong, especially against the autonomous regional governments. His motto would be "España: una, grande y libre," translating to "Spain: one, great and free" (Miro, 2020, p. 6). It was the start of a dark time in Catalonia's history, a time full of grief and sorrow that really tested the resilience that Catalan culture was all about.

From the night that followed Franco's victory, the *noche negra*, Catalonia had already been left neglected by the government. According to Roger Williams, who writes a short summation of Catalonia's history in his *Eyewitness Travel Guide*, the region was on a short supply of resources, and their language, considered "not Spanish", became outlawed (Williams, 2018, p. 49). The autonomous power the Catalans did have was stripped away in order for Franco to consolidate power to himself; that was only the start of 36 long years of suppression. Robert Hughes, who writes about Barcelona's history in his general source *Barcelona*, highlights how Franco conformed the region into his image, which matched the idea that "Spain is a thing

made by Castile” (Hughes, 1992, p. 8). Franco’s actions meant the extermination of languages and customs that did not define Spanish culture. Opposition to his image was tiny, left barely tolerated to the point where it was completely ineffective. In addition, Franco’s repression was ruthless including the deportation and murder of thousands of Catalans, striking fear into their hearts.

For Franco, his major goal in Catalonia was to wipe away the Catalan language, which binded the people together. Being the last region to remain standing in the Civil War, Franco had a large resenting feeling towards the people, and wanted to make sure they were punished for their actions. He banned the use of Catalan in teachings, readings, and in the government, for if they could not speak their language, their separatist thoughts could be limited (Hughes, 1992, p. 9). In addition, in order to further justify his actions, he re-established Catholicism as an integral part of the Spanish lifestyle. Guibernau, a professor of political science at Queen Mary University in London, compares his work to the fifteenth century Catholic Monarchs, who expelled the Muslims and Jews from the country. In 1492, the Christian Reconquista had completely defeated the old Muslim Kingdoms, and Fernando II and Isabella signed the Alhambra Decree, which forced the remaining Jews to either convert or be expelled from the Kingdom. Franco wanted to do the same with the “anti-Spanish” people of the country: the Catalans, the Basques, and the Galicians (Guibernau, 2004, p. 43). He especially wanted to focus on deporting those with large political influence in the regions and strong opposing opinions to himself. This was all to construct order and to build up more barriers to prevent a revolt from below. With his clear dominance over the country, Franco believed he controlled every citizen, from their physical body to their mental being.

However, despite everything he did to tear down the hope of the Catalans, Catalan nationalism remained standing throughout his entire time in power. They continued to find ways to preserve their identity through the use of “cultural resistance”. It started with minute actions such as displaying a Catalan flag outside their homes and writing graffiti in the Catalan language; nothing too big that could raise too much attention, but enough to get other Catalans to participate (Guibernau, 2004, p. 55). Additionally, people continued speaking the language privately within their homes, and setting up classes so the language could be taught (Hargreaves, 2012, p. 20). Guibernau describes the culmination of these actions as leading to division within the region: high class people began to speak Castilian, since that was what was used on the radios and media. It was the language that corresponded with luxury and power. Low or middle class people decided to practice speaking Catalan in private, because it made them feel strong and a part of a group despite their social status. It was the language that helped to establish identity and belonging (Guibernau, 2004, p. 57).

In addition, Catalonia was capable of ruling themselves even in the Francoist years, despite the repression. Franco had made it so businesses in Catalonia would have to work through banks in Madrid, which proved to be a very inefficient system. In order to combat this, banker Florenci Pujol i Brugat was able to set up an independent banking system in Catalonia, the Banca Catalana, to make it easier for those businesses (Hughes, 1992, p. 19). It proved the persistence of the Catalans: that they could create their own system of management, with no help from the government, and maintain it as civilized people. The Banca Catalana also represented a nationalistic feeling of hope when it seemed like Catalonia had nothing to be proud of anymore. Furthermore, Catalonia was capable of maintaining public structures and ways of life through

their own hard work and dedication. They privately funded public libraries, organized festival committees, and gathered together to help improve the community in any way they could (Hargreaves, 2012, p. 22). Catalonia truly was a people's government, where everyone came together to do the unthinkable, and treated each other equally. The Catalans knew that if the government did not act in their best interest, they would have to step up and do anything they needed to in order to not let their community, lifestyle, or identity die, and if it did, they would not let it disappear without a fight.

Catalonia experienced a very difficult situation while Franco was in charge of the county. They experienced neglect, repression, and their capacity to hold onto their culture was greatly challenged. In the face of these barriers though, the Catalans persevered and kept recognition of their identity. To them, language contributed to a way of life which was unique in the world, something they can be proud of. Even when Franco outlawed their customs, they continued to perform them, to show that they would not let a foreign force disrupt their lifestyle. Additionally, they proved themselves to be able to manage the region by themselves, in the face of an authoritarian regime, by taking their own liberty to fund activities and buildings, and create their own banking system. Catalonia had many limitations imposed on them by Madrid, but looking at what they did within those boundaries, Catalonia showed the capability to be independent of the Spanish government.

Dormant Frustration

In 1975, Francisco Franco's rule came to an end with his death. There was no successor to his regime; instead, the major political parties agreed to move back to democracy. After three years of debating, the new democratic Spanish Constitution was ratified (BBC, 2019). For Catalonia, this was a win because the Constitution had recognized some of its autonomy again. However, the real success story comes in 2006, when the Statute of Autonomy was ratified. This statute granted more authority to the Catalan government, giving them more control over the economy and the use of the Catalan language in the region. From an outside perspective, those two things may not seem very significant, but it is important to remember that those are the two things many Catalans pride themselves on.

Language has been touched upon before when discussing their culture, but the economy is just as meaningful to the region, for Catalonia is the wealthiest region in Spain. Catalonia's GDP in 2017 equated to about 266 billion euros, contributing to about one-fifth of Spain's economic output (Ryssdal, 2017). This is attributed to having many ports to allow for trading, especially with other European countries. With such a strong economy and management of money, as previously mentioned before under Franco's regime, it propels many Catalan's vision for an independent state. In the eyes of many citizens, the Spanish government takes more money from Catalans in the form of taxes than what they get back from it. According to the calculations of economic professor Elisenda Paluzie, Catalan residents contribute 20% of Spain's taxes but only get 14% of it back in the form of public expenses (Ryssdal, 2017). This inequality propelled the Catalan government to propose a new taxation plan, one where they can collect their own taxes. This would not seem very likely had there not already been another region in

Spain that did this. In their Statute of Autonomy, the Basque region came to an economic agreement with the Spanish state that they could collect their own tax money from the people, and then just pay a quota to them (*The regional tax system in the Basque Country*). Catalonia would benefit greatly from this if it were to be organized. However, they would soon face an even worse result.

In 2010, the Spanish Constitutional Court struck some parts of the Statute of Autonomy that were very important to the Catalans and deemed them unconstitutional. First up was fiscal policy. The Court confirmed the tax system that was already in place and rejected Catalonia's wish for a different one. Following the 2008 global economic recession, where Catalonia received the highest budget cuts from the government, this did not go over well for most Catalans (Calamur, 2017). Further frustration started to build up when their language and identity was targeted. In the preamble of the document, it describes Catalonia as a "nation" or a "national reality." However, this was reinterpreted to be no more than just fancy wording, having no legal effect (Calamur, 2017). That reinforced the idea that even though Catalonia may have some autonomy, they were still overall dictated by the Spanish government, and the region would not be able to stand on its own in the eyes of other global powers.

Just when Catalonia's future started to lift up, after years and years of repression and distrust, the people got hit with some of the worst news following the transition to democracy. It led to ever-increasing frustrations, and is described by some to be the origin of the "modern independence movement" (Suriñach and Dentinho, 2019, p. 761). Though the people were greatly upset at this turn of events, their frustration laid dormant for several years until a few leaders later capitalized on their feelings and directed it towards an inevitable plan of action

As Seen By the World

Less than a decade later, pro-independence Catalans had had enough. Following both successful and unsuccessful movements such as the United Kingdom withdrawal from the European Union (also known as “Brexit”) and the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, Catalan leaders wanted the chance to decide their own future (Miro, 2020, pg. 160). As the world continues to globalize, it becomes increasingly harder to make your cultural identity stand out when compared to the economic and social giants we have today. Thus, leaders believed that if they did not take up their chance now, it would be even more impossible later for their dream to become a reality.

The major factor in their desire for power stems from wanting to protect their cultural identity and language. The liberty of individuality is a right challenged within the region due to cultural homogenisation, a force plaguing other places in Europe as well. The large differences between being Spanish and being Catalan causes constant clashes between the two groups; much of this conflict is dependent on language, which has been the motivating force behind wanting to stay with people of the same identity (Llobera, 2005, p. 46). From one end, the Spanish government does not want to let go of the stronghold they have over Catalonia. They refuse to make Catalan the sole official language of the region, as it is the co-official language along with Spanish itself, even though Catalan is the language used in the schools and heavily used throughout media (“Barcelona’s Languages”). Furthermore, Spain does not want to teach Catalan in their institutions. Outside of the region of Catalonia, Spain only has seven universities that offer Catalan language courses. In comparison, France has 22 universities that offer a Catalan course, the United Kingdom has 22, and the United States has 24 (Boada, 2015). On the other

hand, Catalonia does not want to teach Spanish either. Currently, the Catalan education system only requires Spanish to be taught a few hours a week in their language class. The rest of their subjects are taught in Catalan in order to promote the language as an important part of the students' lives. Recently though, the Spanish government has considered using their direct rule, as given by Article 155 after the illegal referendum, to force schools to use Spanish more in class in order to give the option to parents who want their child to become more fluent in the language (Strange, 2018). With Spanish already being the more proficient language in both speaking and writing within the region (90% of people compared to 60%), it appears as yet another attack on the teaching of the language (Gumbau, 2017). The Spanish government is not supportive of the Catalan language in the country, and it compels the region to strive to great lengths in order to continue its utilization and keep it alive.

From their perspective, Catalonia believes that not being an independent country lessens their global potential. Going back to the economy, Catalonia accounts for 19% of Spain's GDP, about €212 billion (Romei, 2017). This is on par with the economy of Spain's close neighbor, Portugal, and its GDP per capita is similar to the European Union average just on its own. Since it is a region within Spain, some of that money has to go to the government before the rest can be dispersed throughout the European economy. As an independent state, Catalonia could contribute more to the global economy by directing their trade to where they want it. Already, the European Union can be seen as helpful to the Catalans, as it allows Catalonia to play a major role in Spain without being fully absorbed by them, and in the event they do achieve independence, the European Union could end up being a strong safety net for their economy (Llobera, 2005, p. 3). Along with its economic limitations, having an unrecognized unified culture from the rest of the

world hurts their permanence in the world. During the time of the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, Catalonia ran a global advertisement with the slogan “Where is Catalonia?” (Llobera, 2005, p. 2). The level of inquiry that stemmed from it served as a testament to how invisible the nation was amongst the greater nation of Spain. At the same time though, the Games gave Catalonia the global spotlight they have always wanted. They presented their culture to an unknowing world: their symbols, their flag, their language was even one of the official languages of the Games. Catalonia showed that they can sustain themselves, their economy, and their culture in the midst of a nation that has prominent global influence. Rather than being treated as just a part of Spain, Catalans simply want an independent nation so they are recognized as a country of culture, without being paired with Spanish identity.

Nevertheless, after everything that Catalonia has been through, all the strong arguments they have, full sovereignty has not been recognized. The reasoning behind this is because Catalonia’s future for independence can no longer be determined by their past, only the present. For years, Catalonia has held onto what had happened to them during the Franco years, and have used it as their primary reason to justify their independence, even when the world now has a different cultural mindset than it did more than half a century ago (Llobera, 2005, p. 37). That is not to say that how Franco treated Catalonia was good in any regard, nor can that instance not be used as evidence for their cause, but in order for change to occur, people must learn from the past instead of continuing to lament what went wrong. For a long time, Catalonia has matched the definition of what an independent state should be, as stated in the Declarative Theory of Statehood: it has a defined territory with a permanent population, controlled by one government that has the capacity to enter into relations with other states (US Legal, I.). However, the

definition only works in theory, as there are plenty of other factors that need to be taken into account, such as the economy, its long-term stability, and how they would interact with the other states. The issue is not black and white, and is a decision that cannot be made single-handedly.

In the past, Catalonia worked to earn the Statute of Autonomy, so if they want full independence, they must do so thinking about the world in its present time. With Europe having undergone so many territorial changes within the past century, allowing another state to be granted sovereignty will cause more territories to demand their own independence. Though Catalonia could potentially enter the global arena as a stable country, others, such as the Basque in Spain, Corsica from France, or Vojvodina in Serbia, could potentially make similar requests, undermining the whole purpose of having unitary multinational states (Llobera, 2005, p. 173). Even so, there is one crucial reason why Catalonia was not given their independence in 2017: the vote was not legitimate. When the referendum was first announced, the Spanish government told the region to not follow through with it, or else it would be deemed illegal. With nationalism running wild, the Catalans were inclined to follow through with the vote, no matter the cost, which is why violence ensued. The Catalan elite had created a movement that focused so much on the end goal that not enough time was put toward creating logistical steps to reaching it, and the Spanish government challenged that. They seemed to intentionally escalate the situation in order to force a response from the pro-independence leaders. They could either back down, and lose all the support they had garnered, or they could follow through with the vote, and risk punishment from the government. Initially, the outcome of the referendum prompted the world to disagree with the Spanish state. Violence against one's own people is not acceptable, especially in such a sudden and serious way. However, taking time to look at what led up to it, Catalonia

was the one that appeared to be acting ill-mannered (O'Malley, 2017). As Spain is a democratic nation, the Catalans were seen as a rogue group, upsetting order. The referendum was seen as a national problem instead of an international one, and in response, countries from around the world called for peaceful negotiations between the Catalan and Spanish governments in order to solve the crisis in the country. In the end, the Spanish government used Article 155 of the 1978 Spanish Constitution in order to take direct control over the country, fired the government officials who headed the operations, and reestablished order in the region.

Catalonia has the logistical capability to become its own nation. It has the moral reasoning of wanting to separate in order to protect their identity, has evidence to believe it could start off with a stable economy, and matches the Declarative Theory of Statehood. However, their plan to separate all fell apart when they challenged the democratic Spanish government. It made them appear as the wrongdoers, and garnered condemnation from the rest of the world, the exact people who would be able to recognize their independence. With many of the government leaders of the movement expelled or in jail, the Catalonian independence movement has hit a road bump which it will not recover from for quite a long time.

Catalonia and the Birth of Nations

Independence is not something so easily given no matter the context, especially when it involves a complete reorganization of the map of the world. Many groups have fought for it by taking different approaches, with only some having achieved their goals. Truly, there is no one way to earn independence, but generally speaking, groups that become successful in their endeavors share a unified purpose for what they are advocating for, as well as having the leadership and resources necessary to manage the region's economy, public relations, etcetera once it becomes a recognized nation. Above all though, there must be legitimacy to the cause. If the process is illegitimate, it holds no truth, and the world is unlikely to recognize their independence.

Looking at the factors from the case study of the Catalan independence movement, Catalonia roughly fits some of these reasonings. The region has had a past with repression of their identity, and the central government trying to conform their lifestyle onto them. However, this is nowhere as bad a situation as other groups have had to deal with, such as Kosovo, who claimed Serbia had violated their human rights during an armed conflict as defense for their independence (Bogedal, 2021). In addition, Catalonia has also shown the capability of ruling themselves, with a bustling economy and an organized, democratic government. Even so, the dream falls apart with the illegal nature of the referendum, causing all the other countries to turn away from their plea to accept them into the global community. Considering the Spanish government is a democracy, the fact they broke out of the established order makes them appear wrong. In comparison, Scotland almost achieved independence through a legal vote, and a legal referendum granted South Sudan independence after having to fight for it through two civil wars.

Needless to say, it is very unlikely for another civil war to break out in Spain, but nonetheless, with tension heightened as a result of the implementation of Article 155, the goal going forward should not be to continue the conflict, but rather to establish peace. Catalonia already has a great deal of self-rule, so instead of focusing on their desire for independence, they should focus on what compels them to this referendum: their stronger desire to protect their culture. If Spain embraces how they are a collection of multiple different cultures, it would appease all the autonomous communities, while also maintaining stability and allowing them to keep their power. It would also allow for a more interconnecting country, and may cause more citizens to identify as both Spanish (Spain as a country, not Castilian) and Catalan.

Naturally, being in power right now, the Spanish government sees no reason to change their policies and outlook on the situation, leaving the pro-independence Catalans with having to decide the future of their cause. Given the whole crisis that has occurred, the best way to bring legitimacy back to the movement would be to start over, clarify what are the definite goals of the people, and regain political momentum. The movement has gone on for so long with a multitude of high and low points that some of the arguments for independence have been lost (Minder, 2017, pg. 303). Instead, both sides use the media to depict each other as the enemy, when most opinions on the topic are not as extreme, making it difficult for the common Catalan to identify with either side (Miro, 2020, pg. 157). The longer conflict occurs through the television or radio instead of face-to-face, the more difficult it will be for true negotiations to take place.

To bring up one last topic, it is important to note that many Catalans identify more as European than Spanish, and yet the European Union, one of the organizations that could best incorporate Catalonia into the global world, turned away from the region. In the wake of the

referendum, the European Union released a statement that said they hoped the Spanish president could resolve the issue while maintaining integrity with the Spanish Constitution and the people's rights (Wagner, 2017, pg. 798). In essence, it prevented the crisis from becoming a European issue and was left to be an internal problem. Though the organization was created in part to prevent wars from occurring between neighboring countries, it begs the question if they have the responsibility or right to solve conflicts within a single country if they are asked for help by one of the parties involved. As a result of their statement, it seems the European Union has set the precedent that they would not like to get involved in internal affairs if they can help it, but that may not last forever should a worse situation arise that affects other countries more than just a recognition of a new nation.

Independence movements are a delicate topic to bring up as it forces the central governments to recognize some of their faults. Yet, the larger the movement, the more attention it draws globally, acting similar to a checks-and-balance system from the rest of the world. While independence is not always granted, it may lead into negotiations of compromises that allow for all parties to be happy. Catalonia did not see success in 2017 for a variety of reasons, but it would be inaccurate to call the entire movement a failure. Quite possibly, what the movement may have needed is a loss to show the Catalans that they need a reorganization of their goal before independence is granted, or another solution is reached. One can only hope that in the future, Catalonia, along with other regions looking for autonomy, find their place in the world because in the end, that is the main driving force behind all of these independence movements: the people just want their cultures to be recognized on the global level.

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