



JHUMUNC



THE JOHNS HOPKINS MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE

**GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA**  
*Joint Crisis: Spanish Constitutional Crisis (2017)*  
*Chaired by Reyna Dixit*

Session XXIII

# Gobierno de España

## *Joint Crisis: Spanish Constitutional Crisis of 2017*

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*Topic A: Addressing Public Corruption*

*Topic B: Establishing a Unified Spain*

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### Committee Overview

The Kingdom of Spain is a multi-faceted nation rich in history and culture. Spain has several linguistic groups, and each group holds pride in their unique heritage. Although Castilian Spanish is the official and most widely-spoken language, other significant languages include Catalan, Galician, Basque, and Aranese.<sup>1</sup>

Spain has a total of 17 autonomous regions, each with its own rich history, culture, and even language variation.<sup>2</sup> All of these regions are united under various classical institutions of Spain: the Catholic Church, the government and Prime Minister, and above all, the Spanish Crown.

As one notably prolific region of Spain, Catalonia contributes a large portion of Spain's economy and development.<sup>3</sup> In addition to having its own language and culture, the region also controls its own policing force and other general government services. However, the region of Catalonia has long had a contentious history with the Spanish crown. During the Franco regime in the 20th century, Catalonia's political rights were drastically curbed, and all regional languages and symbols were banned.<sup>4</sup> Although autonomy has since been restored,

there has long been a separatist movement within Catalonia, whose calls for an independence referendum grow stronger by the day.

In addition to regional tensions, the Spanish government is infamous for public corruption. Those among the accused range in importance from mayors to top business leaders to Princess Cristina herself.<sup>5</sup> Given Spain's already dire economic situation, the graft cannot continue to flourish, lest the public loses even more confidence in the institutions of the country.

This committee takes place on October 1, 2017. These issues cannot be postponed, and the committee must immediately decide how and when to act to unify the country and restore discipline to its public institutions.

Note: This guide will reference events that take place after the October 27, 2017, Catalan independence referendum to provide delegates with context. However, delegates should not feel pressured to follow the course of history at all.

<sup>1</sup>CIA World Factbook. "Spain." 2019.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sp.html>

<sup>2</sup>Specia M., Gladstone R., Minder R. "Spain is a Collection of Glued Regions. Or Maybe Not So Glued." NY Times, 2017.

<sup>3</sup>Minder, Rafael. "Crisis in Catalonia: The Independence Vote and Its Fallout". NY Times, 2017

<sup>4</sup>Encarnación, Omar. "The Ghost of Franco Still Haunts Catalonia." Foreign Policy, 2017.

<sup>5</sup>Torres, Diego. "Spain's Never-Ending Corruption Problem." Politico, 2017.

## **Parliamentary Procedure**

This committee will follow standard rules of Model United Nations parliamentary procedure. As this is a crisis committee, actions will be taken through continuous directives as opposed to full draft resolutions. While these directives do not need preambulatory clauses, we expect them to be written with the quality and specificity of operative clauses. Directives should also include a sponsor and signatory list. Crisis updates will also feature throughout the committee, and delegates will be expected to tailor their directives, communiques, and personal directives to resolve the problems introduced by the crisis updates.

As a Joint Crisis Committee, the actions of this committee will be directly affected by, and will directly affect, the proceedings of the JCC: Catalunya committee. The content of all crisis updates will be communication with the other committee and may come in many forms: full group actions, including communiques and actions in directives, which are subject to a vote; or actions by individual delegates, which include personal directives and joint personal directives.



# Delegate Biographies:

## **Mariano Rajoy**

*Prime Minister of Spain*

Mariano Rajoy is the leader of the People's Party (PP) and oversees the executive proceedings of the country. He, as leader of the Government of Spain, stands strongly against any forces that would see the breakup of Spanish unity and destruction of the Spanish identity. Rajoy previously led the conservative PP to file a constitutional appeal in 2006 that struck down self-rule laws, revoking Catalonia's existing autonomy.<sup>6</sup>

## **Alfonso Dastis**

*Minister of Foreign Affairs*

Dastis is a Spanish diplomat from the Independent party and is a part of Mariano Rajoy's government as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He additionally served in Spain's Diplomatic Corps before becoming the Minister. He has claimed that many of the pictures taken of police violence during the voting day are fake and that Russia played a role in the vote.<sup>7</sup>

## **Rafael Hernando Fraile**

*Member of Parliament - Almería Province*

Hernando is a Member of Parliament for the Spanish Congress of Deputies. He is the Spokesperson of the People's Party and the President of the New Generations of the People's Party, a youth organization in Spanish regions.<sup>8</sup>

## **Pedro Sanchez**

*Member of Parliament - Madrid*

Sanchez is the leader of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE). This party opposes the People's Party, which is conservative, because of its social democratic views. The party has a large number of seats in the Catalan parliament but still supports Spanish nationalism.<sup>9</sup>

## **Cristóbal Montoro**

*Minister of Finance and Public Administration*

Montoro is the Minister of Finance and Public Administration of the People's Party and works in Rajoy's government. Previously, he was a member of the European Parliament for the People's Party and since 1993, has represented Madrid in Spain's congressional structure.<sup>10</sup>

## **Manuela Carmena**

*Mayor of Madrid*

Carmena is a retired lawyer and judge who currently serves as the Mayor of Madrid, the Spanish capital. Previously, she increased social spending in Madrid and was investigated by the PP for not complying with their spending guidelines.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Eldridge, Alison. "Mariano Rajoy." Britannica, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> "Alfonso Dastis Quecedo." Politico, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> "Rafael Hernando: A lifeguard who charges as a spokesperson." el Plural, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> "Pedro Sanchez." Independent, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Junquera, Natalia. "Cristóbal Montoro: 'Now it matters to be famous. The policy is emptying out.'" El Pais, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> "Manuela Carmena." Global Influence, 2019.

## **Judge Pablo Llarena**

*Magistrate of the Second Chamber of the Supreme Court*

Llarena serves as the judge of Spain's Supreme Court, overseeing the case of Catalan separatists against the state. He warned the president of Catalonia about the escalation of violence if the referendum was held, but nonetheless, he ignored it and continued to endorse the referendum.<sup>12</sup>

## **Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez**

*Minister of the Interior of Spain*

As a former judge, Zoido Alvarez is part of the People's Party (PP). He is responsible for carrying out investigations into all allegations of police misconduct and the disproportionate use of force by law enforcement authorities in Catalunya.<sup>13</sup>

## **Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría**

*Deputy Prime Minister of Spain and Minister of the Presidency*

Soraya Saenz de Santamaria is a member of the People's Party (PP) as the Deputy Prime Minister of Spain. As one of Prime Minister Rajoy's right hands, Rajoy enforced Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution on the Catalan government to dismiss the president of Catalan, she became responsible for overseeing the functions of the government of Catalunya.<sup>14</sup>

## **Rafael Catalá Polo**

*Minister of Justice of Spain*

Polo is a member of the People's Party (PP) and currently serves as Spain's Minister of Justice. Prior to this, Polo served as Secretary of State for Justice and the Secretary of State for Infrastructure, Transporting, and Housing. The Congress of Deputies passed a motion of censure against him because of his actions in relation to certain cases of corruption.<sup>15</sup>

## **María Dolores de Cospedal García**

*Minister of Defence of Spain and the PP's Secretary-General*

María Dolores de Cospedal García is a member of the People's Party (PP). She warned Catalunya that the Spanish government will use any tools necessary to stop ballot boxes from being put out for the independence referendum and that anyone who collaborates with the organization of the referendum will face criminal charges.<sup>16</sup>

## **Germán López Iglesias**

*Director-General of Police of Spain*

Iglesias is a member of the People's Party (PP). He is the director of the police force that was responsible for the violence that was invoked on the day of the referendum against the people of Catalonia.<sup>17</sup>

## **José Manuel Holgado Merino**

*General Director of the Civil Guard*

Merino is the current director of the civil guard (Guardia Civil), which is the law enforcement of Spain and acts as the police along with the National Police Corps (CNP). These two organizations are responsible for the incidents that occurred on voting day for Catalonia's referendum.<sup>18</sup>

## **José Antonio Nieto Ballesteros**

*Secretary of State Security*

Ballesteros was named Secretary of State Security during the government of Mariano Rajoy, making him second in the interior. He was reproached by the Congress of Deputies in June of 2017, having advised Ignacio Gonzalez that he was being investigated for Operation Lezo. Before being Secretary of State Security, he was mayor of Cordoba.<sup>19</sup>

## **José Manuel Maza**

<sup>12</sup> Minder, Rafael. "Spanish Judge Drops Pursuit of Puigdemont, Catalonia Separatist Leader." *New York Times*, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> "Juan Ignacio Zoido Alvarez." *European Parliament*, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> "Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría: what the truth hides." *Le Plural*,

<sup>15</sup> "Catala Polo, Rafael." *Congreso de los Diputados*, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> "Curriculum vitae María Dolores de Cospedal García." *Fundación Humanismo y Democracia*, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> "Germán López Iglesias." *Ministerio del Interior*, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> "José Manuel Holgado Merino." *Portal de la Transparencia*, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> "José Antonio Nieto." *Libertad Digital*, 2019.

### *Attorney General of Spain*

Maza was nominated by the Council of Ministers to be the Attorney General in 2016, having previously served on the Supreme Court. He worked several high profile cases during his time in the Supreme Court.<sup>20</sup>

### **Pablo Iglesias Turrión**

#### *Secretary-General of Podemos*

Turron was elected Secretary-General of Podemos in 2014. He ran on neither a left nor a right platform, but rather on an anti-austerity platform that was against corruption and the self-serving nature of elites.<sup>21</sup>

### **Juan Antonio Ramírez Sunyer**

#### *Judge*

Under the orders of Judge Sunyer, the Civil Guard began a police operation in Catalonia to dismantle the framework of the referendum voting after it was declared unconstitutional. Because of this operation, many people in the headquarters of the Catalan government were arrested.<sup>22</sup>

### **Ana Pastor Julián**

#### *President of the Congress of Deputies*

Julian is a member of the People's Party (PP). Prior to her work in government, she earned a degree in medicine and surgery and was the Head of Health Service Planning of the delegation of the Provisional Council of Pontevedra.<sup>23</sup> She now serves as the President of the Congress of Deputies, as the speaker of the lower house of the Cortes Generales.

### **Pío García-Escudero**

#### *President of the Senate of Spain*

Garcia-Escudero graduated from the Technical University of Madrid as an architect. He was Senator from April of 1996 to February of 1999 and was elected again in 2004, this time as a member of the People's Party.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> "José Manuel Maza, professor of our Certificate Course on Penal and Business Law, is appointed the new Attorney General." Universidad Europea, 2019.

<sup>21</sup> "Pablo Iglesias Turrión." Busca Biografías, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> "Juan Antonio Ramírez Sunyer, the judge investigating the preparations for 1-O, dies." La Vanguardia, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> "Pastor Julián, Ana María." Congreso de los Diputados, 2019.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



## Topic A: *Addressing Public Corruption*

### Introduction

With discussions of an independence referendum in Catalonia, tensions between Spain and the region of Catalonia have to violence and turmoil. Spain sees this potential referendum illegitimate because Catalonia has a history of bringing forward independence referendums.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, Spain simultaneously faces a rampant corruption problem, which has increased tensions with Catalonia and the Spanish people. To properly address and dispel the issues with Catalonia, the Spanish leaders must unify their people to maintain a united front against the separatist movement.

As a response to the violence, there have been many protests by the public and vocal outcry by politicians and journalists across the Catalonia region and Spain. People are looking for an explanation for the rapid escalation of violence and justice for those injured. Furthermore, with Spain's declaration of not recognizing a potential referendum, tensions still lurk in the community about the status of Catalonia.<sup>26</sup>

### Distrust of the Spanish Government

#### *Public Perceptions*

Since Spain became a democracy in the late 1970s following Franco's regime, most of the defendants tried for corruption have been public figures, including top business leaders, ministers, presidents, mayors, and even the King's sister. Most recently, the Prime Minister of Spain, Mariano Rajoy, will testify in a Spanish court about financial corruption in his party the Popular Party (PP).<sup>27</sup>

In Spain, corruption has been the biggest cause of unemployment because of the constant scandals and economic crises.<sup>28</sup> This has led Transparency International to rank Spain in 41st place out of 176 countries in its January 2017. Spain has fallen behind many of its European Union neighbors, with Denmark topping the chart.

Public confidence in the government has been tanking for the past few years. The *People and Corruption: Europe and Central Asia 2016* report exhibited that two-thirds of all Spaniards believe that corruption is the biggest problem facing the country.<sup>29</sup>

There is an especially insensitive aspect to the rampant graft and profiteering of politicians: Spain's economy was hit hard by the eurozone crisis of 2009, and from 2009

<sup>25</sup> BBC News. "Catalan Protests: Region's President Pushes for Second Vote." 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Stancati, M., Lombardi, P. "General Strike and Violent Clashes Paralyze Barcelona." Wall Street Journal 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Ruiz-Gálvez, Juan José Mateo. "Graft in Spain: Spain Falls to Worst Position in Perceptions of Corruption Index." El País, 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Mateo, Juan José. "Corruption in Spain: Spaniards Flunk Politicians on Fight Against Corruption." El País, 2016.

to 2014, Spain was embroiled in a recession. Austerity measures were enacted, and social services were cut as a result.<sup>30</sup> At a time when average citizens were struggling to make ends meet, politicians embezzling millions made for bad optics at the very least and fueled resentment in the public since.

### *Economic Impacts of Graft*

It is reasonable for the Spanish people to worry about corruption in addition to other national issues plaguing the country. It is estimated that 1% of Spain's annual GDP, around 10.5 billion euros a year, is lost to corruption. A different study showed that it was closer to 3.8% of the annual GDP.<sup>31</sup> These estimates showcase the direct impact that Spanish corruption has on not only the economy as a whole but also on its people's livelihoods as well. Transparency International reports that the Spanish government has shown a concerning deterioration of civil society and democracy, with their Corruption Perception Index dropping to 36th place in 2015, down 10 places over the previous four years.<sup>32</sup>

Such corruption slows down Spain's ability to continue to recover from the economic crisis of 2008-2009. Corruption, or even just the public perception of it, acts to damage investor confidence and increase financial uncertainty.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, any reduction in public spending weakens the welfare state, leaving vulnerable population groups even more exposed to hardship. Basic services funded by the government's purse strings such as hospitals and schools go underfunded year after year. Any resolutions discussed in this

committee that addresses corruption will need to take into consideration its various economic impacts.

As Spain internally battles concerns about trust within and of the state, the separatist movement in Catalonia continues to grow, further substantiated by the corruption plaguing the government. Without dispelling these instances of political, economic, and social uncertainties, Catalonia may have a better chance of succeeding in their independence, which would be detrimental to Spain at large.

## **The Long Fight for Freedom** *Building Tensions*

For centuries, ever since 1714 when Philip V of Spain took over Barcelona, the people have been fighting for independence. Later in 1932, the government of Spain agreed to give Catalonia autonomy, officially named the Catalan Republic.<sup>34</sup>

From 1939 to the 1970s, however, Spain and its regions were ruled by Spanish General Francisco Franco as the head of state and dictator, who effectively and significantly repressed Catalan culture and language.<sup>35</sup> At this point, any gains toward independence were lost, and Catalonian people suffered great losses, through both persecutions and executions. Following Franco's eventual death in 1975, Spain was once again returned to its democratic state with a new constitution naming it a decentralized state. The road to independence for the Catalans continued once more, as they tried to win back what

<sup>30</sup>Daley, Suzanne. "In Lean Years After Boom, Spain's Graft Laid Bare." NY Times, 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Vega, Miguel Ángel García. "Damage from Spain's Crooked Dark Side." El País, 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Transparency International. "Corruption Perceptions Index 2015." 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Erickson, Amanda. "Catalonia's Independence Vote: What You Need to Know". Washington Post, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Birnbaum, Michael. "For some, Catalonia crackdown evokes memories of the dark days of Spain's dictatorship." Washington Post, 2017.

was taken during Franco's time.<sup>36</sup> Although Spain's new governmental structure gave Catalonia more autonomy than previously, it was still not enough for many Catalan leaders and civilians.

In 2006, Catalan was recognized as a nationality in Spain after negotiations between the Catalan people and the Government of Spain. However, when this agreement reached the courts, it was argued that although the Catalan people were a nationality, Catalonia was not a legitimate nation. The Spanish Constitutional Court removed the official recognition after just a few years.<sup>37</sup>

Even with Catalonia's prosperous economy and resources compared to some other Spanish regions, some nationalists have frequently pushed for fewer national expenditures to go towards poorer regions and instead should be more equally dispersed by population.<sup>38</sup> With the accumulating list of perceived injustices by the governance of Spain, tensions continue to rise in the present day, and it is only a matter of time before Spain must tackle the issue at hand with its continuously hostile region.

### *Present Day Catalan Discontent*

Although Catalonia does uphold certain self-government powers, the people's discontent seems to be at an all-time high, and only comparable to that during Franco-Catalonia. They remain discontent with the amount of political and economic power they hold, urging for the government of Spain to absolve their demands or else they will secede as an independent state.<sup>39</sup>

These tensions were extremely high in 2008 when Spain's economy entered a recession, and general expansion halted. Although the economy exited the national recession in 2010, it reentered into economic turmoil again soon after in 2012. Numerous populations all throughout the nation arose in protest for the governmental leaders to address the issues at hand. By 2015, Catalonia's political coalition was already voicing support for secession from Spain. However, one of the barriers to a successful Catalan secession remains the Spanish Constitution of 1978, which does not allow for complete regional autonomy as a separate nation or state.<sup>40</sup> At this point, it would not be too long before the region had reason enough to officially declare its wishes to secede from Spain. However, Spanish delegates must address the possibility of Catalonia's secession alongside other pressing issues of growing corruption and distrust among the government and state leaders.

### *Claims for Independence*

While Catalan discontent over Spanish governmental control has been present for centuries, it was not until the past few years that real pushes toward independence were made. In 2014, a non-binding poll was fielded throughout Catalonia to collect individuals' opinions for or against secession through a referendum.<sup>41</sup> Due to the large prevalence of support of around 80% of participants for independence and around 90% for Catalonia becoming a state, Catalan President Artur Mas pushed for regional elections in January of 2015. That September, separatist parties

<sup>36</sup> Minder, Raphael. "Crisis in Catalonia: The Independence Vote and Its Fallout." *New York Times*, 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Birnbaum, Michael. "For some, Catalonia crackdown evokes memories of the dark days of Spain's dictatorship." *Washington Post*, 2017.

<sup>38</sup> "Catalonia crisis in 300 words." *BBC*, 2019.

<sup>39</sup> "Spain faces a constitutional crisis over Catalonia." *The Economist*, 2017.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Stone, Jon. "Catalonia's independence: How did it happen? A timeline of key events." *Independent*, 2017.

forming a pro-independence coalition won the electoral majority, gaining public support for promoting their independence platform.<sup>42</sup>

Only a month after, the regional parliament attempted to initiate a vote for independence from Spain, but efforts were quickly dispelled. Spain's constitutional court halted the vote on grounds that it conflicted with Section 2 of the Spanish constitution.<sup>43</sup> This section states that: "The Constitution is based on the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, the common and indivisible homeland of all Spaniards; it recognizes and guarantees the right to self-government of the nationalities and regions of which it is composed and the solidarity among them all."<sup>44</sup>

After Carles Puigdemont took office as the new President of the Generalitat, replacing Mas, independence measures continued despite national resistance. A proposal for a referendum was backed by arguments of Catalonia's unique and strong background in politics and economics as well as a right to self-determination. However, the Spanish government further argued against their claims, stating that the constitution had absolutely no mention of this right.<sup>45</sup>

Against all Spanish disapproval, on June 9, 2017, Carles Puigdemont announced an official date for a referendum on October 1, 2017, to vote for Catalonia's independence and autonomy from Spain.<sup>46</sup>

## Referendum Suspension Attempts

A couple of months after Catalonia's announcement for an independence referendum, the national constitutional court declared it illegal and called for an immediate suspension of efforts. This did not discourage the Catalan people, however, until the Spanish government began using more violent measures to quash the separatist movements. The Spanish police not only confiscated voting ballots from the regional government but also infiltrated Catalonia governmental ministry offices to search for evidence of illegal activity.<sup>47</sup> Catalan people became increasingly hostile towards Spanish rule, and protests soon ensued.

As the October 1st date steadily approached, Spanish officials grew increasingly wary of Catalonia potentially ignoring national disapproval and simply moving forward with the referendum. Subsequently, when the day finally arrived, thousands of people occupied the streets of Catalonia at polling stations to let their voices be heard once and for all.<sup>48</sup> The events that would occur after would not only showcase the extent to Catalonia's independence claims but also the amount of force Spain was willing to exert to prevent the claims from becoming legally supported.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Constitution of the Government of Spain, Section 2, October 31, 1978

<sup>45</sup> Ellyatt, Holly. "Constitutional crisis looms in Spain as Catalonia looks to vote on independence." CNBC, 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Stone, Jon. "Catalonia's independence: How did it happen? A timeline of key events." Independent, 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

## Police Violence

### *Voting Day Violence*

On voting day, the regional courts of Spain in Madrid ordered police to intervene with the referendum. Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy deployed thousands of troops to arrest officials supporting Catalan independence and confiscate ballot forms from voters.<sup>49</sup> There were few limits as to what could not be done to stop the referendum from going through.

Spanish national police fired rubber bullets at protestors and used batons to beat back voters. They sealed off schools and other polling stations while seizing millions of ballots. For polling stations that were open, police broke into them and pulled voters out.<sup>50</sup> CNN reports that police “were seen pulling voters out by the hair and restraining elderly people.” After the first reports of violence, the government pulled the police out of polling centers. In Barcelona, 218 people were injured. Anti-riot police were deployed in some areas where voters and protestors were having sit-ins. On this day alone, almost 900 people were injured.<sup>51</sup> Despite nearly 90% of Catalan voters supporting the referendum efforts, more than half of those eligible voters were unable to cast their votes, prevented by Spanish opponents to secession.

### *Public Response*

After this incident, the Spanish government and courts backed the national police’s decision. Carles Puigdemont, a Catalan pro-independence politician, called the violence “unjustified, disproportionate, and irresponsible” that displayed a “dreadful external image of Spain.”<sup>52</sup> Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch called the incident an “excessive and unnecessary use of force.”<sup>53</sup>

For many Catalan individuals affected and harmed by the events on voting day, this was one of the greatest breaches of Spanish democracy since Franco’s dictatorship.<sup>54</sup> Many exaggerated reports of violence circulated after voting day violence. Images photoshopped to show excessive police violence arose. However, a picture arose of an elderly woman with a bleeding head after being confronted by the police.<sup>55</sup> This public and media response puts pressure on Spain to address and justify the degree of violence seen on voting day.

<sup>49</sup> Erickson, Amanda. “Catalonia’s independence vote: What you need to know.” *Washington Post*, 2017.

<sup>50</sup> Minder, R., Barry, E. “Catalonia’s Independence Vote Descends Into Chaos and Clashes.” *NY Times*, 2017.

<sup>51</sup> Dewan, Angela. “Catalonia Independence Referendum: What Just Happened?” *CNN*, 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Sanz & Croft, “Catalan leader accuses Spain of “unjustified violence” in referendum crackdown,” *Reuters*, 2017.

<sup>53</sup> Macià, Maria. “Amnesty International accuses Spain of violating human rights in Catalonia.” *El Nacional*, 2018.

<sup>54</sup> Erickson, Amanda. “Catalonia’s independence vote: What you need to know.” *Washington Post*, 2017.

<sup>55</sup> BBC News. “Catalan Protests: Region’s President Pushes for Second Vote.” 2019.

## Questions to Consider

1. *How will the government restore the public's trust?*

In the midst of scandal and rampant allegations of both police brutality and public corruption, the Spanish government must work to regain the faith of the public if it wishes to govern effectively.

2. *How will the government mitigate the economic impacts of graft?*

In a time when Spaniards felt the effect of a massive global recession in 2008 and anticipate another recession in the near future, regular Spaniards have little faith that their government can weather a difficult economic situation— especially if the People's Party is skimming off the top.

3. *Should exposed government officials be ousted?*

The committee must decide how to handle revelations of corruption throughout its work. Will ousted officials be pardoned? Used as an example? Removed from the party? Given time for redemption? And, most importantly, how will the public react to this behavior?

4. *How will Spain project the image of a unified nation?*

The unsteadiness of Spanish unity— and loyalty to the crown and government— has become a talking point on a global scale. How will the committee work to assure Spaniards, and the rest of the world, that Spain is one nation and one people? How can the myriad language groups and the public of Spain be brought together?

5. *How will Spain address internal corruption issues while simultaneously preparing for Catalonia's potential secession?*

While it is vital for Spain to firstly unify its leaders and people, the growing issue of Catalonia's separatist movement is on the rise. Therefore, how will the delegates of this committee work to prioritize issues to regain public trust and prevent Catalan independence?

## Conclusion

For centuries, the region of Catalonia has fought for increased political and economic power and recognition, despite being one of the most prolific regions in Spain. More recently, as the separatist region pushes for independence claims and a referendum to ensure its legality, the delegates of this committee must work to maintain Spain's image as a unified country.

To do so, you must simultaneously attempt to keep Catalonia as a Spanish region while also tackling the inner corruption and violence issues in the government. Without public support, it will be nearly impossible to restore the economy, oust corrupt officials, and decrease the power of the separatist movement.



## Topic B:

### *Establishing a Unified Spain*

## Introduction

Since the tension of public protests and violence originated because of the territorial disputes over the Catalan region, it would benefit Spain to garner support in opposition to the referendum. Catalonia is a nation with its own culture and language dating back centuries. The dispute for freedom centers around not only identity but economic issues as well. Therefore, the delegates of this committee must consider a variety of factors to effectively prevent Catalonia from seceding, or, if they do succeed in independence, to quickly recover after the loss of a major region.

## Claims to Territory

### *History of Catalonia and Their Claim to Autonomy*

Catalonia's history dates back to 1150 when the son of Petronilia, Queen of Aragon and Ramon Berenguer IV inherited the territory. It was its own autonomous region until the War of Spanish Succession and defeat of Catalonia in 1714 and other autonomous regions in the Iberian Peninsula, leading to the state we now know as Spain.<sup>56</sup> Bourbon Philip V abolished the Constitution, and with it, Catalan autonomy. However, separatism reemerged in the 1800s. In the 1850s, Catalans made strident efforts to keep the Catalan language alive through creating a Catalan press and a theatre. This movement is known as the

“Renaixença,” meaning “rebirth”.<sup>57</sup> In 1876, the Carlists were defeated, and the church transferred support to the Catalan movement for autonomy. The two strands of Catalan nationalism were the conservative (linked to Roman Catholicism) and a secular one. The conservative strand was predominant in the early 20th century, and by 1913, Catalonia had a small degree of autonomy. In 1925, however, Miguel Primo de Rivera attacked Catalan nationalism and repealed what autonomy they did have from the legislation.<sup>58</sup>

This policy led to the formation of the Esquerra Republicana, a left-wing party in Catalonia. They won the elections in 1921, and the leader of the coalition shortly proclaimed the region as the Catalan Republic. Through a compromise, in September of 1932, the statute for Catalan autonomy became law. However, just eighteen years later, after a three-year Civil War, the Nationalists were victorious, and thus Catalonia lost their autonomy once more. In 1938 at the Battle of the Ebro, General Francisco Franco regained control of the region for the Spanish, and his government created repressive policies against nationalism in Catalonia.<sup>59</sup> Catalonia was granted autonomy in 1977, and in 1978, the Convergence and Union party was founded. Full autonomy, however, was not granted until 1979. In 2006, Catalonia was given nation status, and from that moment the Catalan government was given the same

<sup>56</sup> Rodriguez, Vicente. “Catalonia.” Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

responsibility for taxing their citizens like that of the Spanish central government. However, in 2010, some of this autonomy was decreased as a Constitutional Court of Spain ruled that Catalonia was not a nation, despite ruling that Catalans were indeed a nationality.<sup>60</sup>

### *Modern Day*

The movement for Catalan independence gained support throughout these years until the Constitutional Court in Madrid ruled in 2010 that there was no law that said Spain needed to recognize Catalonia as an independent nation. This ruling, coupled with Spain's economic crisis and recession, heightened tensions because the Catalan region's wealthy populations saw themselves carrying the poorer regions of Spain.<sup>61</sup>

A coalition in the parliament of Catalonia led by President Carles Puigdemont from the conservative party CDC and backed by the leftist party ERC supports Catalan nationalism and holds a majority. This coalition is responsible for calling the independence referendum, showing a strong push for autonomy by the regional government.

### *History of Spain's Claim to the Catalan Region*

A huge part of Spanish culture lies in the unique and expansive nature of Catalan culture. Ever since the Spanish conception as a nation, Catalonia and its leaders have been integral in drafting the original constitution in 1812 and solidifying the country for what it is today. Now, shared cultural factors such as language are common elements in

Catalonia as well as other regions in Spain.<sup>62</sup> Whether Catalan people support it or not, Catalonia is an integral part of Spanish society, and Catalans are still considered to be Spanish individuals. Unlike many Catalan claims of being entirely different and separate from their Spanish counterparts, that argument is also more flawed than it may seem. Separation from Spain may, in fact, detract from Catalan culture, leaving it as something different from what it was before.<sup>63</sup>

Spain additionally has a strong economic incentive and claim to maintain the Catalan region. Catalonia accounts for around 20% of Spain's economic output and a quarter of its exports.<sup>64</sup> It is known as the main producer of industry in Spain from maritime trade to modern industry, such as finance and technology. Additionally, Catalonia's GDP per capita is close to that of the average of the European Union and even above that of Spain itself.<sup>65</sup> Catalonia's industries include tourism, exports, manufacturing, and industry, all of which are of major importance to the Spanish economy's sustainability.

Catalonia has a well-established and long industrial tradition, with 21 percent of its GDP coming from industry. For comparison, industry accounts for 17 percent of the Spanish GDP. Catalonia also has the highest number of regional companies, having 609,000 in 2017. Additionally, Catalonia is a popular region for foreign investment. It has received the highest amount of capital out of all other regions in Spain, having received over 43 billion US dollars.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Calamur, Krishnadev. "The Spanish Court Decision That Sparked the Modern Catalan Independence Movement." *The Atlantic*, 2017.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Garcia, Rafael Arenas. "Why Catalonia Should Stay with Spain." *New York Times*, 2017.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas, Daniel. "Catalonia: What would an economic split from Spain mean?" *BBC*, 2018.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

A loss of Catalonia would result in a drop of about two percent of the Spanish G.D.P in taxes alone. While Catalonia would gain around sixteen billion euros from the split in the money it would save due to not having to pay taxes to Spain, they would still suffer economically. Over thirty-five percent of its exports go to the Spanish market, so a loss here could represent an intense hit to the Catalan economy itself. Additionally, Catalonia would have to invest in itself to make up for the losses of state structures. For example, Catalonia would need to create embassies, central banks, and other parts of the state infrastructure, since they would no longer be supported and financed by the Spanish government. Luis de Guindos, the Spanish Economy Minister, speculated that the Catalonian economy could see a major loss of up to thirty percent of its economy, along with a potential doubling of the unemployment rate.<sup>67</sup>

Then, there is the pressing problem of Spain and Catalonia's debt. In 2016, Spain's national public debt was around 1.18 trillion dollars. Catalonia is one of the regions with the highest public debt, at 72.2 billion euros. This amount is about 7% of Spain's debt, making it an expensive loss to Spain. Additionally, if Catalonia were to secede, there is a possibility that it would still remain indebted to Spain for 52.5 billion euros.<sup>68</sup> Because of this, the Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and his government publicly pledged to stop the referendum. If Catalan citizens refuse to halt pro-independence claims for legal reasons, perhaps these large economic consequences will convince them otherwise.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Vicente, Adrien. "How does the rest of Spain feel about Catalan independence demands?" *The Local*, 2017.

<sup>70</sup> Schreuer, Milian. "Catalin Separatist Want Independence. Who Else?" *NY Times*, 2017.

Many Spaniards have also spoken out about Catalonia's push for autonomy. One nurse from Galicia, Cristina Garcia, said about the referendum, "I am sick of hearing about Catalonia. And what about the rest of Spain, we don't have problems, we don't have a crisis, we don't have anything?"<sup>69</sup> While many believe that Catalonia has solid backing and reasons for independence, the resulting consequences for all parties involved would likely only create new issues for everyone.

## Consolidating Support

### *Consolidating International Support*

International support for Spain's claim to Catalonia is varied. Catalonia can typically count on European support from other nations, however, there are many countries that do not want to encourage separatists movements and instead want to promote stability in Catalonia.<sup>70</sup> Donald Tusk, the European Council President, said that Catalonia's separatist movement was not on the "agenda" of the European Union summit. He went on to explain that "formally speaking there is no space for an EU intervention."<sup>71</sup>

In China, the foreign ministry supported unity and also expressed the idea that this was a domestic issue of Spain. The spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry, Lu Kang, said that they believe that "the issue of Catalonia belongs to the domestic affairs of Spain. We believe that the Spanish central government can properly handle relevant issues and maintain national solidarity, unity, and prosperity."<sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Parvaz, D. "Madrid Might Totally Take Over Catalonia as Crisis Over Independence Referendum Deepens." *Think Progress*, 2017.

<sup>72</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

"Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lu Kang's Regular Press Conference on September 28, 2017."

Thus, there is a common sentiment across non-European countries that while Catalonia's potential secession would indeed have effects on the Spanish economy, it is not an issue that requires other global actors to become involved.

On a similar note, Steffen Seibert, spokesman for German Chancellor Angela Merkel, asserted their interest in Spanish stability, which would include adherence to the Spanish constitution.<sup>73</sup> Dutch Prime Minister, Mark Rutte, said that it is "an internal Spanish matter," a position also taken by Emmanuel Macron, the president of France.<sup>74</sup> Smaller EU countries have also not offered support. Countries such as these rely on Spain's economy for investment, and the Spanish economy could face dire problems if Catalonia were to effectively secede.<sup>75</sup>

Additionally, some countries recognize the power in Madrid and are hesitant to get involved. A senior European Union diplomat at the EU summit reportedly explained that "There is not much to gain from backing Barcelona and a lot to lose from angering Madrid."<sup>76</sup>

Even if Catalonia were to successfully secede from the rest of Spain, there would be no guarantee of remaining a part of the EU. Many pro-secession Catalans emphasize their desires to remain in the union even with independence, but it is simply more a matter of feasibility and practicality than intention.<sup>77</sup> Without a majority vote from the other EU countries, including Spain, the member states would not allow for the newly created nation to become incorporated. This process would

additionally take years, so it would not even be immediate that Catalonia would achieve the same nation status as Spain with the infrastructure and resources to sustain themselves.<sup>78</sup>

Therefore, even if other European countries recognize the arguments for Catalan secession and independence, it is ultimately safer and more politically and economically feasible to continue supporting the Spanish government, thus avoiding getting drawn into someone else's fight. With general European support for Catalonia to remain in Spain, the national government has the backing of many powerful allies to halt Catalan claims.

### *Support for Catalan Independence*

The Junts per Catalunya, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, and the Popular Unity Candidacy are the parties that are officially campaigning for Catalan secession that is in the Catalan Parliament. However, there are groups not represented in Parliament which also support independence. These include Catalan Solidarity for Independence, Estat Catala, Endavant, PSAN, and Poble Lliure.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Reuters. "Germany: Rule of Law Must Hold in Spain." 2017.

<sup>74</sup> Camps, Carlota. "Spanish PM Major Fails to Make Europe Forget About Catalonia." *Independence*, 2017.

<sup>75</sup> Bosch, Sofia. "Here's How Bad Economically a Spain-Catalonia Split Could Really Be." *CNBC*, 2017.

<sup>76</sup> Emmott, Robin. "Catalonia Finds No Friends Among EU Leaders." *Reuters*, 2017.

<sup>77</sup> Garcia, Rafael Arenas. "Why Catalonia Should Stay with Spain." *New York Times*, 2017.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Reuters. "Cracks Appear Within Catalan Coalition Seeking Split From Spain." *Reuters*, 2018.

Although the Catalan separatist movement does not have as much international support as the Spanish government, the delegates must not underestimate the pro-independence groups. With enough persistence and support, Catalonia may still successfully succeed in garnering independence and full autonomy from its mother country. In order to prevent that from happening, Spain must draw upon its own supporters and arguments of claims to Catalonia to remain a stable and cohesive country with all of its regions aligned.

## Questions to Consider

1. *How can Spain fortify their claims on Catalonia?*

Though the Spanish government has a technical legal claim over the region, it has long struggled to distinguish itself as an independent region. The committee must come up with a solution that incorporates Catalonia into the larger context of a unified country, without violating the basic principles of human rights.

2. *How can Spain sway public opinion away from supporting Catalan independence?*

The global public is largely in favor of the Catalan cause. The committee must work to discredit the notion of independence, while still attempting to convince the Generalitat de Catalunya to work towards peace and unification.

3. *How can the Spanish government ensure similar referendums are not brought up by other autonomous regions in the future?*

With one revolution comes the risk of many others to follow. How can the committee ensure that autonomous regions like the Basque Country or Galicia will not be the next to undermine Madrid's supremacy?

4. *How can Spain address Catalonia's economic concerns?*

Much of Catalonia's desire for independence comes from anxiety surrounding its ability to continue to sustain other, poorer autonomous regions of the country. How can Spanish wealth be redistributed— or otherwise— to satisfy Catalan demands? Is it even the responsibility of the Spanish government to do so?

5. *How can the country move forward after the referendum and maintain a sense of national identity even after the potential loss of one of its regions?*

After a referendum and Spanish movements to unify the country, how will the Spanish government assure its public— and the global public— that Catalonia will be stronger and safer under its rule? Depending on the actions of the committee, the body may need to work hard to avoid trade sanctions or lashings from the UN.

## Conclusion

With the continuously growing separatist movement in Catalonia, the leaders of Spain must act quickly and effectively to halt the region from gaining independence from its mother nation. With numerous historical and modern arguments against Catalan secession, there is considerable support for the Spanish government. With the support from fellow European Union members for the unification of Spain, Catalonia will hopefully fail in their efforts for independence and complete autonomy from their mother country that has helped it flourish for so many years.

Nonetheless, the delegates of this committee must not underestimate their Catalan counterparts, as the pro-independence actors make seemingly no effort to slow down their referendum process. Even with the events of voting day and other subsequent referendum processes, the separatist movement and its actors continue to fight for their independent rights by any means necessary. By invoking cultural, economic, political, and social claims, however, Spain can potentially end the constitutional crisis and return to its previously cohesive state with all of its regions unified.

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