Abstract

In recent years the media have been full of dramatic headlines on Catalonia. At the time of writing (July 2018) there is a serious institutional crisis unfolding daily. Extracts from media reports serve as a backdrop to this paper.

The paper seeks to provide the background needed to understand what has driven events as far as the current situation: a declaration of independence, an immediate takeover of direct rule, with dismissal of the Catalan government (now part in exile, part in pre-trial detention), forced – for many, illegal – elections, and every effort being made by Spain to prevent a majority in the new Parliament from forming a pro-independence government and implementing an independent state.

This means a brief overview of Catalonia’s 1000-year history, with particular attention to more recent events, and especially since the long-standing dictator, Generalissimo Franco, died peacefully in his bed in 1975. The three-way fugue since 2010, of Catalan civil society, Catalan politicians and Spain’s leadership (with the aid of the courts), will frame the latter part of the presentation.

Keywords: Catalonia, independence, Spain, politics
Introduction

“In 2010 Spain’s Constitutional Court issued a landmark ruling that inadvertently laid the ground for Sunday’s independence referendum in Catalonia” (Calamur 2017). “In the largest demonstration Barcelona has ever seen, 1.5 million citizens according to the Catalan Police marched in Catalonia’s capital after the banner ‘Catalonia, Europe’s new state’” (Pericay Coll 2012). “In a vote in the regional Parliament, Catalan lawmakers voted 72 to 63 to a plan for independence from Spain by 2017. The Spanish Prime Minster promised to halt the move for independence” (Gray 2015) “Spain is enduring the most serious challenge to its territorial integrity since October 1934, when the Catalan authorities rose against the democratically elected government of the second republic” (Dempsey 2017). “Apart from Brexit, this is Europe’s greatest challenge since the wars in the Balkans” (Adams 2017). The media are full of dramatic headlines on Catalonia.

This paper is based on the presentation I was invited to make at the 2018 IAFOR Conference on Global Studies in Barcelona. Had the venue been elsewhere, or had the Conference been a couple of years ago, it would probably have made little sense to present it. But events in Catalonia, as outlined in the abstract, have been making news headlines for the past few years. My task is to give you a brief overview of Catalonia’s 1000-year history, without which it would be impossible to understand the recent, sometimes dramatic events here.

It is structured in several parts: A brief history of Catalonia; The lead-up to the declaration of independence; October 1 and the aftermath; The sociodemographic context of the process; and, concluding remarks.

A Brief History of Catalonia

For anyone living in the New World, a thousand years may seem a very long time, but others might wish to point out that the Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Romans left their marks in what we today call “Catalonia” well over 2,000 years ago, and that Homo sapiens was known to have lived here 22,000 years ago (and the Neanderthals doubled that figure) [see figure 1]. What is today Catalonia was the main Greek colony in the peninsula, and the starting point for the Roman occupation. And Catalonia’s mountain passes saw Hannibal’s elephants cross them, as well as countless other invading armies, and waves of colonisation, in both directions.
The 1000-year figure has been chosen because that marked the creation of what today we could call an “independent state”, though in feudal times political structures had little to do with the structure of today’s democracies, however imperfect.

At that time the local leading noble, the Count of Barcelona, controlled an area spanning the eastern, Mediterranean end of the Pyrenees mountains (and of the so-called Marca Hispanica). It was a buffer zone, a “march”, between the Franks to the north and the Moorish kingdoms to the south. His overlord – to which his family had paid tributes for generations, basically in return for protection from enemy attacks – was a Frankish king, Hug Capet, whose father had failed to come to the Catalans’ help when the Caliphate of Córdoba (the Muslims the time controlled nearly all of the centre and south of the Iberian peninsula) razed Barcelona to the ground in 985. In response, count Borrell II decided to stop paying the Franks their tributes as a vassal (Balcells, 1995. p. 3): in effect, then, in 988 AD he declared independence. Nearly 300 years ago, the historian Nott (1705: 30) had placed Catalonia’s effective sovereignty a century earlier, under Wilfred the Hairy: in 884 the Frankish Emperor
Charles the Great granted him «full and sovereign authority». He raised and administered the taxes, he minted his own coinage, he made the laws, he granted privileges, he waged war against the Muslims, he made alliances. As you all know, alliances those days were often dynastic, with other royal families.

Thanks to the military exploits of the counts (see Figure 2), early in the 13th century Catalonia’s territory as such became close to what it is today, except for the northern part, above the Pyrenees, which was lopped off by the French king in the mid 17th century.

Figure 2. The expansion of Catalonia, 900 – 1150 AD approx
Source: By Каталонські графства в IX-XII вв.svg: Nektoderivative work: Lliura (talk) - Каталонські графства в IX-XII вв.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10713293

Catalonia and the kingdom of Aragon (the heirs of which, Ramon Berenguer IV and Petronella, married in 1164) had expanded under the great King (and Count!) James the
Conqueror southwards (Valencia) and across the sea (Balearic Islands) (Sapiens 2012). Each newly occupied territory was granted to a son, as a separate kingdom, though they later came under a joint leadership (and on accession, heirs would be required to swear not to split up Aragon, Valencia and Catalonia).

Each of these territories kept its mint and its tariffs, developed its own laws (Catalonia developed a widely-used Maritime law), especially civil law, and governing property ownership, inheritance and similar key issues.

From the mid-14th century, in each of the territories, institutions of self-government (always under the king) were set up, initially for tax-raising purposes. In Catalonia it was called the “Diputació general”, or “Generalitat”, and Catalonia’s government retains this name. Its seat of government, the Palace of the Generalitat, in the heart of the city, was established for this purpose in 1400 (in a large building that was soon rebuilt in an elaborate Gothic style).

Another dynastic alliance was forged in the late 15th century, between King Ferdinand of Aragon (including, therefore, Catalonia, crippled by successive plagues brought in from the east, mainly because of Barcelona’s trading economy) and Isabelle, the heiress to the much more potent Kingdom of Castile of the day. The Catholic kings brought virtually all of what is now Spain under a single, shared crown. Their grandson, Emperor Charles, had wide dominions in Europe, and a rapidly growing set of colonies in central and southern America (Balcells 1994: 21 and ff.). Of significance is Balcells’ remark: «Only as a normal nation can Catalonia contribute to the difficult building of Europe, which needs all types of contribution». (p. 28)

For several centuries thereafter the territories of the Kingdom of Aragon each retained their laws, currency, trade tariffs, etc. in the old “confederal” tradition (Elliott 2002 [1963], p. 78). Each new count of Barcelona had to earn allegiance, by negotiating updates in Catalonia’s laws, whereas the Castilian tradition was based on the divine right of kings: the Cortes did not pass laws (Elliott, 1984, p. 218). There was no “Act of Union” along the British model.

The Catalan Parliament, which met regularly with the king, though less so in the 17th century, consisted of three chapters: the military chapter, which brought together the representatives of the nobility; the ecclesiastic chapter, with the representatives of the religious hierarchy, and the royal chapter, with the representatives of the cities and towns of the dominion of the monarch (Elliott, 1984, p. 218). However, farmers and the urban middle classes were excluded (as were, needless to say, the former serfs, and the working classes) (Sapiens 2010). Members were appointed to chair this institution in rotation between the three chapters: and the current president of Catalonia is the 131st name on that long list.

This was retained despite a war – and a short-lived Catalan Republic – in the mid-17th century, in which the Viceroy, the Count of Santa Coloma, was assassinated, and the Castilian king, forced to choose, relinquished Portugal and retained (most of) Catalonia (Elliott, 1984, p. 450).

Home rule was wiped out at the (tragic) end of the War of Spanish Succession. The Catalans (spurred on by an agreement with England) in the main supported the Habsburg pretender, against the Bourbon pretender who was soon cast as a centralist with a uniformist, nation-
building plan that had, in fact, started in the previous century (Count-Duke Olivares and his raping and looting troops were and are not revered in Catalonia). Supporters of the Habsburgs – whose colour was yellow – were rounded up and hanged even for wearing yellow ribbons (Tedo 2018). And following the Treaty of Utrecht the Catalans were left to their fate by the Allies. The Bourbon pretender, Philip V (of Castile, IV of Aragon) took Barcelona after a bitter 14-month siege, on September 11, 1714 with French assistance. That date has since become Catalonia’s National Day ( . . . and many Catalans, to this day, call the WC “Philip’s Place”).

The victorious king abolished Catalan institutions, brought in government on the Castilian model, and gave secret instructions to surreptitiously introduce Spanish into administration and other fields, instead of Catalan (Strubell, 2011, p. 126). He let households own a single knife, which had to be chained to the dining room table. He ended the healthy Catalan tradition of rotational terms of office and imposed life-long political appointments (for mayors, for instance) which effectively sowed the seeds of corruption, a scourge which still exists on a considerable scale in Spain.

And the Catalans since then have periodically protested against the continuing effort to assimilate Catalonia under the Castilians’ conception of Spain, as exemplified graphically in an 1852 map [Illustration 3]. They wrote unheeded demands to monarchs in the 18th (1760) and 19th centuries (1885), and most recently, to prime ministers (e.g. BF/ACN 2013), Espada 2015). In 1919, at Versailles, in spite of the 18,000 volunteers Catalonia contributed to the Allied armies, the rights of the Catalans were once more overlooked. In 1924, in Geneva, Spain vetoed Catalonia's demands for liberty before the League of Nations (Consell Nacional Català, 1945).

![Figure 3. “Political Map of Spain, 1854”](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e5/T.V.%281857%29_-_%289%29_MAPA_POLITICO_DE_ESPA%C3%91A.jpg)
Catalans wrote to the United Nations (Consell Nacional Català, 1945):

Catalonia has been an oppressed nationality under the Monarchy, under the Spanish Republic, and under Franco. The removal of Franco alone will not solve the Catalan national problem, as it was not solved by the overthrowing alone of the Bourbon Monarchy.

In spite of being subjected to civil wars, military coups, and deeply-rooted derision for nearly four centuries, the Catalan people still exist. Some say this is a (little) miracle, a quirk of fate. Instead of being assimilated into Castilian (that is, Spanish) culture, language, traditions, the Catalans have survived (e.g. Strubell 2008: 2 . . . without being independent. I myself think that it is amazing the Catalans are not independent, like so many similar peoples across Europe.

This survival is partly because of the collective self-esteem of a growing urban middle class, centred around a thriving city, Barcelona, that did not reject its historical and cultural roots in the second half of the 19th century: rather, it delved into them and gradually rediscovered with amazement and pride a medieval history and a thriving literature which had been hidden for over a century.

The growth of Barcelona, in itself, is an interesting phenomenon. The old feudal laws in Catalonia that prevented Catalan farming families from being able to accumulate capital thanks to surpluses in production were largely abolished by an important ruling by the king, the “Sentence of Guadalupe”, in 1486, that put an end to several civil wars in Catalonia, and allowed farmers (those whose heads had not been lopped off in the process) to buy exemption from abusive feudal conditions (see Primer Congrès d'Història Moderna de Catalunya, p. 192). In some parts of Europe peasants did not achieve the same result until the 18th or 19th centuries (see Marfany, 2016, 25). Over the years, farmers claimed the right to become owners of their land, and even before that point, in return for the use of the land, they paid a fixed amount, rather than a proportion, of their harvested products. These two facts encouraged them to invest in improving the land (much of which is hilly): building terraces, digging wells, buying oxen and better tools, and so on. These improvements let them advance from a subsistence economy to producing and selling surpluses, which in turn led to expanding craft industries and greater trade through the market towns. As from the 18th century, in particular, agricultural production soared as did health conditions in general, and surplus labour moved from the land into Barcelona and other cities (as elsewhere in Europe). The seeds for the 19th century industrial revolution were thus sown in Catalonia.

Over history Catalans have learned to rely very little on the authorities in general, and the Spanish government in particular. Catalans are often said to have an anarchist streak in them. They built their own cultural organisations privately (the Liceu opera house, Palau de la Música Catalana, the Sagrada Familia cathedral, the Hospital de Sant Pau, a host of smaller institutions such as theatres, club houses, etc.) and supported Modernist – art nouveau – Noucentista and avant-garde artistic movements (Eaude 2011), while it was the authorities in Spain that, in the main, paid for the Teatro Real or similar structures in the capital. In 1848 Catalans built the earliest railway funded privately for commercial reasons (Contel et al, 2011. 145), whereas the first railway in Spain, paid by the Spanish authorities, first and foremost allowed the queen to travel in comfort to her summer residence (in Aranjuez).
Catalans traditionally sought private employment and, to this day, the proportion of the working population that are civil servants is strikingly lower than in the rest of Spain. In July 2017 in Catalonia there were 2.23 public servants employed by the regional government per 1000 inhabitants, fully 20% less than the overall figure for Spain: 2.80 per 1000 (Malagón 2018; see also Confederación de Empresarios de Navarra 2015),

Yet the pressure on assimilation continued and even increased as the Catalans, dissatisfied with inefficient and corrupt government based 600km away and serving largely extractive rather than productive economic interests (that last to this day), demanded home rule, around the time that the Norwegians (peacefully) and the Irish (violently) were doing the same.

Two Spanish coups d’états in the 20th century, one a blood bath and a rehearsal for World War II, were largely attempts to keep the aspirations of the Catalans (the economic powerhouse of the whole peninsula) in check (Crameri, 2008: 21). Barcelona was bombed by the Axis forces on many occasions, as Churchill (BCNEnHorasDeOficina, 2013) was to recall in the UK Parliament on 18 June 1940:

«I do not at all underrate the severity of the ordeal which lies before us; but I believe our countrymen will show themselves capable of standing up to it, like the brave men of Barcelona, and will be able to stand up to it, and carry on in spite of it, at least as well as any other people in the world. Much will depend upon this».

As Generalissimo Franco’s tanks rolled into Barcelona early in 1939, with the support of the Germans and the Italians, and the fearsome Moroccan cavalry, his leaders vowed to crush the Catalans once and for all. Tens of thousands of Catalans fled into France, leaving Catalonia partly decapitated. Tens of thousands of those that remained, with a clean conscience, were nevertheless rounded up and thousands of them were then shot by firing squads after show/mock trials or court-martials. Centralist, autocratic government affected all the population of Spain of course, but the Catalans lost more: their home rule, hard-earned in 1931 (Balcells, 1996, 94 and ff).

When General Franco died in his bed in 1975, the immediate resurgence of Catalan demands for home rule (“Llibertat, Amnistia, Estatut d’Autonomia”) was largely instrumental in Spain for allowing the return from France, in 1977, of the exiled President of Catalonia, Josep Tarradellas, and for the 1978 Spanish constitution (several of whose main drafters were Catalan) containing provisions for ample home rule . . . across the whole of Spain. In the event 17 regions – many of which had never dreamed of having to solve their own problems! – were to formalise “statutes of autonomy”. Catalonia’s, adopted in 1979, allowed great strides to be made in many fields, including of course the advancement of education, culture and the Catalan language (Crameri 2008, Botella 1985). The main problem was initially (and still is) a longstanding acute net drainage of tax revenue (there are documented complaints about this as early as 1880 (see also Flos y Calcet 1896, [10b]):

«Nosaltres sabem guanyar diners, però la gent de Madrid té l’habilitat de fer-nos-els saltar de la butxaca, i tot els ahorros acumulats a Catalunya van a parar directament o indirectament a sostenir el desplafar de la Cort»

→ «We know how to earn money, but the people of Madrid have the ability to make it jump out
of our pockets, and all the savings accumulated in Catalonia end up directly or indirectly sustaining the Royal Court’s squandering». Almirall (1880)

Self-government irritated those who had called for a “No” vote in the referendum on the Constitution: particularly the Francoist sectors of “Alianza Popular” (Valdecantos 1978, El País 1978), which was to be refounded as the conservative Partido Popular.

Their successors were in power from 1996 to 2004, and from 2011 until a few weeks ago. During those periods their policy was one of consistently reversing devolution, of recovering central power.

The Lead-Up to the Declaration of Independence

Partly because Catalans felt their powers were being eroded, and partly because in nearly 25 years the text of the Statute of Autonomy had become outdated, in a period of rapid globalization, in September 2005, after months of negotiation, 89% of the Catalan Parliament passed the draft of a new Statute of a proto-federalist kind that was believed to fit in the Spanish Constitution. The only party left out of the agreement was the Partido Popular, who by then was being seen as an “anti-Catalan” party (CIS 2015; Vázquez & Olivares 2008; Gil Lara 2013; La Información 2016; Martínez 2013).

The events that led up to and followed the October 27, 2017 parliamentary declaration of independence would probably not have taken place . . .

1. Had the text of the draft Statute not been arrogantly chopped back by the Spanish Parliament;
2. Had it not been taken – after its ratification in a referendum in Catalonia in 2006 – to the Constitutional Court in what a leading jurist has called a “coup d’État” (Pérez Royo 2007);
3. Had the Constitutional Court not struck down significant articles in June 2010 (Tribunal Constitucional 2010), paradoxically rendering the Statute unconstitutional in the process, and triggering off a gigantic protest demonstration in central Barcelona;
4. Had the Spanish government moved to amend some of the articles removed by the Constitutional Court, instead of refusing to defuse the political crisis and appease the Catalans;
5. Had not the massive grassroots mobilization of pro-independence sentiment – channelled through numerous organisations sprouting up between about 2006 and 2010 (see Dowling 2014), and then spurred on by hundreds of local, unofficial referendums and the setting-up of the grassroots Catalan National Assembly, which now boasts over 40,000 members – spear-headed the independence movement. Note that the demonstrations organised every September 11 since 2012 are vast: for instance, one spanned 400 km, from one end to the other of Catalonia, in 2013; another formed a 13 km-long Catalan flag, its nine red-and-yellow stripes being made by people six astride wearing appropriately coloured tee-shirts, in 2014.

How did the politicians react? The moderate nationalist coalition “Convergència i Unió” had won all the elections between 1980 and 2003 (see Crameri 2008), when it was ousted by a
coalition of three parties (including Esquerra, the historic pro-independence party, which had never got more than about 15% of the votes). Following the Statute of autonomy fiasco, Convergència regained power in the 2010 election, and began to speak of a “national transition”. In the midst of a growing clash with central government, again in the hands of centralists, President Mas obtained a parliamentary mandate to renegotiate a reduction in the net amount of taxes leaving Catalonia every year, which amount to over €15 billion (€2,000 for every man, woman and child). He was snubbed by prime minister Rajoy, and promptly called and won a snap election in November 2012, though with a reduced majority, with a commitment to hold an official poll on independence. He reached agreement on a government programme for the legislature with the reinforced Esquerra, to build state structures: between the two, they held an outright majority. Being snubbed in the Spanish Parliament (for the umpteenth time) he couldn’t call a referendum with Spanish authorization, so they enacted legislation to call an official poll (the Act specifically said it WASN’T a referendum). Nevertheless, the Spanish authorities did not stand still, but rather waged a weapon-less war against Catalonia’s moves towards independence (Strubell 2016). They also challenged the legislation before the Constitutional court within hours of it being published and blocked the official poll. After an internal crisis between the main players, the vote went ahead, though spear-headed by tens of thousands of volunteers, and not formally through the administration. Despite fears the police would be sent in to prevent the poll, a massive majority of those that did vote (over 40% of the electorate) did so for independence.

A year later the main two independence parties formed a broad coalition («Junts pel Sí», that is, «Together for Yes») with the support of many civil society organisations, with the mandate – if it received a sufficient victory – to declare independence and negotiate the conditions with Spain in order to ensure a smooth transition. The election programme was not challenged by the Spanish government. But it stayed politically motionless, like a cobra, as events unfolded in Catalonia. In parallel it constantly sent laws, decrees, even resolutions, even debates to the Constitutional court in order to block them.

In that election, held on September 27, 2015 – with the highest turnout ever – the coalition won a historic 72 seats, to the opposition’s 63 and, given it did not reach 50% of the vote, it decided to hold a referendum on independence. Madrid refused to budge.

The ensuing Act (adopted in September 2017) laid down that the official announcement in Parliament of the result would be either a declaration of independence, or the calling of a regional election, depending on the yes or no vote. Another Act laid down the conditions for a legal transition from one sovereignty to the other. The opposition parties reacted vociferously (the coalition pushed legislation through very quickly, to prevent in-house filibustering and knowing that the Spanish government would immediately challenge it before the Constitutional court, thus automatically blocking the legislation yet again) but chose not to defend a single one of their amendments.

This was just weeks after the Barcelona and Cambrils terrorist attacks, hastily improvised after an explosion in their base which killed the leader of the group, a man purporting to be an imam in a Catalan town, who had served several years in prison for aiding illegal immigrants, and had amazingly had an expulsion order reversed. And he was, according to some sources, in the pay of the Spanish secret service, who visited him several times. Old
rumours of a false flag action to abort the referendum, which had been dreaded by Catalans for several months, obviously resurfaced with a vengeance (El Robot Pescador. 2016).

The month of September was marked by desperate (non-political) attempts by Spain to stop the referendum, announced for October 1, 2017. It sent in thousands of para-military police from across Spain, to the chant of “A por ellos!” (“Go get ‘em!”; for videos, see for instance https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Pa5GQ2FSM0), who were housed in three cruise liners in the ports of Barcelona and Tarragona. It threatened members of the electoral boards with thousands of Euros in daily fines unless they resigned (which they did), it threatened any media publishing pre-referendum information, it raided printing presses, local magazines, publishing houses, warehouses, trying to track down the elusive ballot boxes, ballot papers, and other electoral material. Not a single ballot box was found.

On September 20th, without forewarning the Catalan police, Spanish police raided a number of Catalan ministries in search of evidence regarding the technical organisation of the referendum, and a number of top officials were arrested. During the day thousands, then perhaps tens of thousands, of people gathered outside the Catalan Ministry of Finance while it was being searched by court officials, in a peaceful protest. No-one was attacked or physically threatened. The only damage was to three marked police cars. The fact that they were parked in the street, instead of in the Ministry car park; the fact that they were left unguarded; the fact that they were left unlocked; the fact that they had weapons left inside them; all this lends support to the idea, voiced by Catalans and non-Catalans alike, that they were the spark for serious acts of violence which would have allowed the authorities to speak about a “rebellion”, or “sedition”, or a “tumultuous uprising”. All of this was absurd (I witnessed events on site, three times that day), but within a few weeks the two leaders of the main civil society pro-independence organisations (the two “Jordis”) were locked up without bail, and remain in prison to this day, awaiting trial.

PM Rajoy was assured that the so-called (since 2014) “illegal referendum” would not take place, and said so publicly. The unity of Spain, he said, was “sacred”. Literally (e.g. García & del Riego 2015).

October 1 and the Aftermath

On the day, October 1st, the ballot boxes and papers appeared out of the blue, and soon Spain’s attacks on non-violent voters by the police – who ignored the court order to confiscate material “without disturbing the peace” – were seen right round the world and shocked public opinion: how could this be happening in an advanced western democracy? But the vicious attacks on the computing system controlling that double voting was impossible, and that people voting were only those eligible to do so, lasted much of the day. Tens of thousands had spent the weekend in the polling stations to ensure they would not be sealed off. Hundreds of thousands packed the entrances until the count had been finished and delivered (for video, see MediaPro 2018).

That night, PM Rajoy publicly said that the “illegal referendum” had not taken place.

Those in power in Madrid over history only seem to accept full victories, and unconditional surrenders. That is how they lost the whole of the Spanish empire, by a host of unilateral
declarations of independence. Could they accept, in 2010 the Catalan Parliament law banning bullfights (a popular initiative led by an Argentinian), as the Canary Islands had done 20 years before, without anyone objecting? No, they had to take it to the Constitutional court, whose composition of bullfight-lovers may have been instrumental in its being struck down six years later.

After October 1st, we now know pressure was applied by the leaders of the European Union for president Puigdemont (who is now in exile, having been held up by tipped-off traffic police as he drove through Germany) not to apply the law, once the resounding success of the yes vote had been announced on October 10th (bear in mind the Unionist opposition counted on it not happening, and called for a boycott). Puigdemont was apparently assured that in return Rajoy would be pushed, at long last, to the negotiating table.

However, in Spain there was a twin-pronged response which completely ignored all calls for dialogue.

1. Charges were laid against the whole of the political leadership of Catalonia (alongside hundreds of mayors, public officials, etc.) of rebellion, sedition, contempt of court and misuse of public funds. I have already mentioned social movement leaders.

2. On October 27, immediately after the Catalan Parliament had adopted the postponed resolution declaring Catalonia’s independence, the Spanish government dissolved the Catalan Parliament, dismissed the Catalan government, and called Catalan elections. It had and has no Constitutional basis for doing so, as I hope the Constitutional court will have no choice but to admit.

Some members of the Catalan government went straight to Brussels to give a press conference, before receiving summons to the “Audiencia Nacional” court in Madrid. Virtually all those that heeded the summons are in pre-trial detention. The rest are in exile, awaiting the decision of courts in Belgium, Germany, Scotland and Switzerland on requests for extradition (known in the EU as “European Arrest Warrants”). The future of the Catalan people’s democratic movement to implement its independence depends very heavily on the trumped-up charges being thrown out of these courts abroad.

Spain carefully planned the 21st December election (as I say, illegally called: only the Catalan president has that prerogative) so that the independence parties would lose. They have actually admitted this in public. The leaders of the main electoral lists of the pro-independence parties were silenced (mostly being in prison), the Spanish media were grotesquely biased in favour of the “Unionist” parties (see Democracy Volunteers 2017) as they had been in the 2016 election (see Figure 4) (see also CAC 2015).
They blasted Catalan policies quite unfairly (indoctrination in schools; public TV manipulating opinion and needing “cleansing”; the independence movement being led by “Nazis” and having to be “decapitated” . . . after creating a “social conflict” inside Catalonia); the “Unionist” parties purportedly received an obscene amount of money to spend on propaganda; and all this in the general climate – with the Catalan authorities and police force being controlled from Madrid – of intimidation by violent groups of ultra-nationalists apparently immune to any form of control.

In the event, and despite an even greater turnout than in 2015, the Catalan independence parties managed to retain an outright majority in the Catalan parliament: 70 out of 135 seats.

However, Spain has continued to put the spanner in the works of the parliament. Despite advice from the advisory Council of State and its own legal service, it managed to prevent president Puigdemont from defending his candidacy to renew his presidency; after this, his number 2, Jordi Sánchez, was denied the political right he has to attend the plenary to defend his own candidacy; the third candidate, Jordi Turull, was arrested shortly before the second round of voting; Jordi Sànchez, having received confirmation of his political rights from the United Nations Human Rights Committee, was again prevented from leaving prison; and only was the Parliament left free of political and court interference when it came to the fifth candidate, Quim Torra, who is the current president – but provisionally, until the rightful president can return. Torra is publicly committed to implementing the result of the October 1 referendum and the December 21 election, which means he may well end up in prison as well, unless the international community – better late than never – plays its firm hand in this matter.

How has Catalan public opinion taken all of this? Well, the number of people actually voting for independence has increased every single time: 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017 (twice!). (see Bambery and Kerevan 2018)
The sociodemographic context of the process

It is important to realise that the process has taken place against a backdrop of the very varied geographical origin of the population of Catalonia. The figures are astonishing and reveal both the extent of what some would call colonisation by people from the rest of Spain (particularly intense from 1950 to 1974), and the considerable degree of social and political integration that many of these families display. A recent survey (CEO 2018b) shows that almost a third of the adult population eligible to vote (and therefore, excluding foreigners) in Catalonia was born outside Catalonia (see Table 1).

Table 1

Data from CEO (2018b). Universe: Adults, Spanish citizenship, resident in Catalonia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where you were born</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catalonia</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>68·7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of Spain</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>24·5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of the European Union</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1·0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of the world</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>5·9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, only one in four adults with Spanish nationality in Catalonia can claim three or four grandparents born in Catalonia! Over half have not a single grandparent born in Catalonia (see table 2). These figures might easily have led one to think that a bid for independence could not muster much support.

Table 2

Data from CEO 2018. Universe: Adults, Spanish citizenship, resident in Catalonia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many of your grandparents were born in Catalonia?</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>52·7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>6·8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>15·1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>4·6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>20·0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0·6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0·1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Yet in that survey the item “P.31 Do you want Catalonia to become an independent State?” got 47% “Yes” replies, as against 45% “Noes”.
- Family geographical origin and self-attributed identity are as expected key [independent!] variables as regards independence.
• Among the subjects born in Catalonia, 59% were in favour of independence. Among the subjects born in the rest of Spain, 73% were against it.
• Among the subjects who describe themselves as Catalans living in Catalonia, 84% were in favour of independence. Among the subjects who describe themselves as Spaniards living in Catalonia, 92% were against it.
• Among those who said they preferred to answer the questionnaire in Catalan, 73% were in favour of independence. Among those who said they preferred to answer the questionnaire in Spanish, 69% were against it.
• Among the subjects who said they mainly watch TV3 (Catalan public television), 76% were in favour of independence. Among the subjects who said they mainly watch one of the four most popular channels in Spanish, 69%-82% were against it.
• Among the subjects who said they mainly read La Vanguardia or El Periódico in their Catalan-language editions, 58% and 62% respectively were in favour of independence. Among the subjects who said they mainly read La Vanguardia or El Periódico in their Spanish-language editions, 78% and 64% respectively were against it.

In an earlier survey (CEO 2018a), clear (but by no means absolute) cleavages were also visible in opinions on the Spanish government, the Spanish parliament, the European Union, the Spanish army, the Spanish police, the Constitutional court, even the Catholic church. Interestingly, among leftists there is much more support for independence than among rightists.

**Concluding Remarks**

Let me point out in conclusion that the motives for wanting independence (beyond the universal fact that all peoples have the right to freely determine their political future) and its probable consequences have been explained and discussed in literally hundreds of books and articles, and thousands of local debates and lectures, including hundreds abroad. As meticulously explained in a recent paper, the motives are much closer to a Lockean revolution of the US kind, than to an ethnic one (Vidal-Aparicio 2015). Many, many Catalans of whatever origin or language background, want good and fair governance.

I hope my paper will have helped you to understand the “wherefores” of Spain’s latest political conflict with Catalonia. There is a clear clash between Articles 1 and 2 of the Spanish Constitution: Article 1 lays down, among other things, the prevalence of democratic values, while Article 2 states that Spain is indivisible. Sadly, those in power in Madrid show no signs of realising that what is an entirely political conflict needs to be solved by political negotiation round a table, and not in a jail cell.
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**Corresponding author**: Michael Strubell  
**Contact email**: m_strubell@yahoo.com