

# External View of Catalonia's Quest for Independence

## Mainstream and Organic View

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### Abstract

The author predicts that Catalonia's Quest for Independence will not succeed simply because there is no external support and the reason for independence is selfish and not justified. The constitution of Spain does not permit Catalonia to declare independence.

Full paper see <http://www.us-chinaforum.org/ifay220A.pdf> Chinese version 卡特隆尼亞獨立運動和局外觀 - 台灣該獨立嗎? see The Observer Magazine published in Taiwan

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Independence movement does not happen every day. Catalonia's quest for independence from Spain has its cause but whether or not she will succeed is uncertain. Nevertheless, this is not only a serious matter for Spain but also a current event that has caught the attention of the world. Reports claimed that the referendum on the independence movement in Catalonia received 89% of yes vote, but only 43% of the registered voters turned up to vote, hardly an absolute majority. There were also plenty of citizens opposing independence by parading and protesting. Thus, the President of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont is in a bind. He can't simply announce and declare independence but requests a negotiation meeting with the Spain central government, whereas the Spanish Prime Minister, Marion Rajoy, is taking a hardline position, not giving up independence no negotiation. He even threatens that he will invoke the article 155 of the 1978 Spanish Constitution to replace the defying local Catalonia government - if Catalonia declares independence. The constitution is not specific on what the central government can do, but according to legal scholars and media analysis, sending troops into Catalonia to replace government is not out of the question.

Although Catalonia has its own language, she has been under Spain's royal sovereignty since 12th century. Catalonia is located at the Northeast corner of Spain with a beautiful and famous coastal city, Barcelona, as her capital. Catalonia is the richest and most industrialized region in Spain and Catalan people are very proud of their history and language with independent minds. So some Catalonians think they are really an independent country. Of course, some Catalonians have other rational thinking considering separation unwise. The independence issue is naturally the making of the politicians and political parties. Since the death of Spain's dictator, Francisco Franco, in 1975, Catalonia had become an autonomous region again and had been ruled by the conservative nationalist party, CIU, for 23 years. Spain has many political parties, the Social Democratic Party, like PSC-PSOE, is one of the largest in Spain. In 2003, CIU was replaced by a coalition of three left-wing parties. The industrialized Catalonia attracted many immigrants from other parts of Spain and elsewhere. The immigrants and lower class speak Spanish but the middle and upper class speak Catalan. So besides the issue of taxation and the corruption of the

central government, preserving the Catalan language, but not really a racial issue, is one reason for the Catalan's quest for independence.

Unlike two other autonomous zones in Spain, Catalonia has no independent taxation system; the local government's budget comes from national tax revenue. This is another factor influencing the separation movement. Catalonians pay more taxes than getting back from their central government budget, thus some resentment there. However, Catalonians should understand their constitutional obligation which cannot be simply based on money. Previously, I have discussed a question of California's quest for independence. The U.S. and her every other State will never accept California to become independent. Therefore, no matter how rich California becomes or how many Asians and Mexicans immigrate in, any independence dream is out of the question. Although not the same as California, Catalonia's quest for independence is not optimistic. So Puigdemont is hoping for international support, but no major powers in EU come forward. Recently, media reports of Spanish police using batons and rubber bullets in Catalonia to deal with protestors created a bit of international attention and sympathy, but the police was just doing their job. Unless extreme violence is involved, there will not be any external interference. So Puigdemont has no choice but asking for negotiation, hopefully getting a tax break or something beneficial to Catalonia.

Of course, one cannot make a definite conclusion on the Catalonia separation matter yet. However, from external observer's view, the conclusion would not be far from the above discussion; the separation issue would be over soon. However, we may extend the Catalonia case to discuss the concept of 'independence' in general. From nationalism and political science viewpoint, independence, especially successful independence movement, succeeds mostly after a successful revolution and the reason for revolution is usually caused by ruling government's oppression, incompetence, and corruption to the point of depriving its citizens' human rights and chance to make a decent living. Independence movement is for survival. Only when people lost freedom, unable to live and become desperate, would they sacrifice their lives to revolt. Only under this circumstance, others, sometimes foreign nations, may lend a helping hand. However, many independence movements are motivated by selfish reasons and they are promoted by political forces, internally or externally. Catalonia's quest for separation is because of money, resentment of paying more money than other poor regions of Spain. Isn't it selfishness? If this would be a justifiable reason, then wouldn't every rich village, town or province ask for independence? Would the world be in peace? So it is hard to justify Catalonia's quest for independence. From preserving Catalan language point of view, everyone under a free and democratic regime has the freedom to speak and learn any language. Seeking independence for the reason of preserving a particular especially minority language is just another selfish idea. If this selfish thinking and behavior were acceptable, then India would have become a dozen nations and the U.S. would be separated into English, Spanish, German, French, Italian even Chinese speaking parts?! After all, Catalan is already one of four official languages in Spain.

From Catalonia's separation movement, we can also see that the separation movement in Taiwan is a selfish idea and behavior. It is certainly not acceptable by people desiring to have a free and democratic society. It is unbelievable that any political party in Taiwan would try to change the language and to remove the deeply rooted, thousands of years, Chinese culture to cultivate the sentiment for separation from Mainland China. How can it succeed? Would the 1.3 billion

Chinese allow it? No! Worse than Catalonia, Taiwan will not receive any sympathy from the international community, never mind support. The U.S. and Japan certainly have no justifiable reasons. Decades ago, when the Mainland was a lot poorer than Taiwan and politically less stable than present, the minority political force in Taiwan violated its constitution to promote 'independence', that was pure politically motivated idea based on selfishness. Now, the Mainland China has become the world's second largest economy (which Taiwan derives trade benefits from) and politically China has become confident enough to defend globalization and to launch modern Silk Road programs to help global development. Isn't it childish and stupid for some politicians continuing to promote 'Taiwan Independence'? From external observers' view, it is like pushing Taiwan people off the Chinese high-speed train; they will either get killed or seriously hurt. This is not threatening words; this is observers' reasonable deduction. The people in Taiwan, especially young people, can't afford to be blind or ignorant any longer. They must abandon the selfish and childish idea of separation or independence and look forward to a new world order of global harmony. Independence is a dead alley for Taiwan, only cross-strait unification will lead to genuine cooperation and a bright future for Taiwan.