

A Year on, Catalan Secessionists Are Still Trying to Break Spain's Historical Union | Opinion

[Montserrat Ginés and Alfonso Valero](#)

On 11/5/18 at 9:47 AM

The undersigned, Spanish academics and professionals, submit the following response letter to the opinion article "[Carles Puigdemont and Quim Torra: It's been a year and Catalonia is still not free.](#)"

Spain is a European nation enjoying economic prosperity and full political freedom for more than 40 years, since the country became a democratic nation under the Constitution of 1978. The Spanish Constitution was voted in a referendum by all Spanish citizens. Catalanian participation in this referendum was 67.9 percent, with over 90 percent voting approval (surpassing the approval percentage of the Madrid region).

To amend the Spanish Constitution to permit regional separation (now contrary to the existing Constitution) would require a poll involving all Spanish citizens. According to a recent poll conducted by [GESOP](#), it was estimated that less than a majority of Catalans (about 42 percent) would be in favor of participating in a binding referendum for secession.

The events involving the use of force by Spanish national police were precipitated by the seditious Catalan government that deceived Catalans in the secessionist ranks regarding the consequences of the illegal referendum of October 1, 2017, encouraged them to participate, and instructed the Catalan police to turn a blind eye to the mandate of the Spanish Constitutional Court that had declared the referendum illegal.

Furthermore, the referendum was not an accurate reflection of the views of all Catalans, since those who recognized the illegality of the referendum did not vote.

There are no political prisoners in Spain. The Catalan politicians that are under preventative detention, provided by the Spanish law and pending trial, and those who fled to avoid criminal charges, have created their own predicament when they violated the Spanish Constitution and the Catalan Statute of Autonomy (the law of self-government in Catalonia) and issued an illegal proclamation of an independent Catalan Republic on October 27, 2018.

It is unjustifiable that they expect to avoid the consequences of these actions. Likewise, the pro-secession activists are not in preventative detention for their ideas but because they encouraged their followers to take to the streets and obstruct the work of the judiciary officers in performance of their duties.

These politicians and activists are in preventative detention on account of charges for serious crimes under the Spanish Criminal Code brought against them by the Public Prosecutor's Office—including rebellion, and where appropriate, sedition—and during the investigation of a Supreme Court Magistrate (in Spain the investigation is conducted by a judge, not a prosecutor) to open the hearing phase of the case.



Carles Puigdemont (L), self-exiled former President of Catalunya, and Quim Torra, current president of the Generalitat of Catalunya walk as they prepare to address a press conference in Brussels, on August 27, 2018. ARIS OIKONOMOU/AFP/Getty Images

A similar result would prevail in the United States where its Supreme Court has proclaimed that the United States Constitution has created “an indestructible Union of indestructible States.”

This point was aptly illustrated by the response in 2013 of President Obama to the petition of over 100,000 Texans requesting support for the secession of Texas. The President’s spokesman responded that the Constitution “did not provide a right to walk away from the [Union]” and he further stated that not secession but “participation in, and engagement with, government is the cornerstone of democracy.”

Accordingly, we believe that the answer to differences of regional opinions in Spain is not secession but engaged citizenship at the level of Spain's autonomous regions. Precisely, the Spanish system of regional self-governing, and particularly in the case of Catalonia, has the highest degree of autonomy in Europe.

That being said, we wish to highlight two major fabrications on which pro-secession parties built their agenda over the last several years:

Secession is a win-win situation: The protest movement that spread throughout Spain during the difficult years of the past economic crisis was used by secessionist forces in Catalonia to create a populist environment that portrayed the rest of Spain as a backward country exploiting a more progressive and affluent Catalan region. It was argued that, as an independent nation-state, Catalonia would become financially solvent, a more prosperous and just society, and that it would be readily accepted in the European Union. These promises did not withstand rigorous analysis and were refuted by the facts and subsequent events.

We are one people, one culture, one language: Although it is true that Catalonia has its own history, culture and language, this distinct heritage has been an instrument of manipulation chiefly propagated in the schools and by the government-supported Catalan public media. Catalonia is a bilingual, diverse society, with a large number of citizens whose roots lie in other regions of Spain. These Catalans are torn at the thought of forced separation. Moreover, Catalans of all origins and backgrounds opposing the secessionist project feel disengaged and disenfranchised; they are made to believe that they don't belong.

Before "operation secession" began, the mixed population of Catalonia had enjoyed a peaceful and fruitful existence. Mr. Torra and Mr. Puigdemont's

delusion of secession has shattered our precious coexistence. Catalans—friends, family and neighbors—are deeply and bitterly divided as a consequence of their political adventure. We here appeal to their sense of civic responsibility to redress this situation before it is too late.

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The views expressed in this article are the authors' own.