

If Catalonia Fails, We All Fail

By Michael Krieger

Oct 17, 2017 12:04 pm

While I've touched on the Catalan independence movement in several recent posts, I want to make one thing clear from the start. I don't have a strong opinion on whether or not independence is the right move for the region and its people. It would be completely inappropriate for me, a U.S. citizen living in Colorado, to lecture people 5,000 miles away on how they should organize their political lives.

While I don't have an opinion on how Catalans should vote, I unwaveringly support their right to decide the issue for themselves. When it comes to the issue of voting and referendums, we've entered a topic far bigger than Catalonia, Spain, or even Europe itself. When it comes to the issue of political self-determination, we're talking about an essential human right which should be seen as inherent to all of us, everywhere.

The Catalan push for a right for vote on independence should be seen as part of a much larger push toward greater self-determination that humans will demand in increasingly large numbers in the years ahead. The time is ripe for us as a species to insist on a transition toward a more voluntary, sane, peaceful and decentralized process of political organization. This is an idea whose time has come, and I thank the Catalan people from the bottom of my heart for bringing it to the fore, and also for conducting themselves in such a noble, courageous and thoughtful manner. You are leading the way for the rest of us.

The key reason Madrid is wrong on this issue relates to its insistence that Spain must sustain itself in its current form forever. Since Spain is a manmade political creation, this is the modern equivalent of claiming a "divine right of kings," but rather than bestowing this archaic conception on individual rulers, it's bestowed upon a nation-state. This is not just an absurd position, it's patently anti-human. As I discussed in the post, [It's Time to Question the Modern Nation-State Model of Governance](#):

As things stand today, humans essentially have two choices when it comes to political life. We either accept the nation-state we're born into and play the game to the best of our advantage, or we try to become citizens of another country with values that more align with our own. The only way to really shatter existing political power structures and form new ones is through violent revolution or war, which is an insane way of reorganizing matters of human governance. One of Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's key arguments in casting the Catalan referendum as illegal is that Spain is an indivisible nation under the 1978 constitution. Let's think about what this means in practice.

Anyone who's spent any time in Spain understands how culturally and linguistically distinct many of the regions are when compared to Madrid. These are differences that go back centuries and can't be brushed off by a constitution created a few decades ago. The idea that these various regions must be part of a centralized Spain even if the people within the regions want political

autonomy is ethically preposterous, as well as authoritarian and evil in every sense of the word. If done properly, human governance should always be a voluntary arrangement. If an overwhelming majority of culturally distinct people within any nation-state decide the super state is no longer working for them, they should have every right to leave. Anything else is bondage.

If humans are going to evolve into better forms of political organization rooted in voluntary associations, we must first reject the clear authoritarian nature of our current political environments. All of us are randomly born into nation-states which we never chose in the first place and told to accept them as eternal structures. The people of Catalonia have realized the absurdity of this and are taking a brave stand on the issue. Anyone who genuinely believes in human rights must stand with the people of Catalonia and support their right to a referendum should they choose to have one.

With political philosophy out of the way, I want to move on to a discussion of strategy and why I think those leading the push for Catalan independence have played their hand brilliantly thus far.

First, leadership's emphasis on a peaceful movement in the face of thuggish violence and aggression by the Spanish state is of the utmost importance. For an independence movement to succeed and create a better, more free society afterwards, things must be done in a conscious way. As I've said many times before, ends never justify the means. **The means are everything.** Moreover, by exposing the opposition as goons, you foster increased solidarity amongst your neighbors who may have been on the fence when it comes to independence. You also create passionate allies across the world. The Catalan people have succeeded remarkably on all these fronts.

Immediately following the October 1st referendum, I was concerned that Catalan President Carles Puigdemont would make a mistake by prematurely declaring independence. This would've been a huge error since while 90% voted for independence, only 40% or so voted. While such a lopsided result certainly makes the case that Catalans deserve a vote for self-determination, it's not a clear mandate given the low turnout. If the people of Catalonia want to succeed in their push, Madrid must be seen as the unreasonable — and very public — aggressor in virtually every move on the chessboard. By not prematurely declaring independence Catalonia pushed the move back into Madrid's court, which is wise since the government there has a habit of making really stupid decisions.

Unsurprisingly, it didn't take long for Spain to make yet another blunder with yesterday's imprisonment without bail of two of Catalonia's independence leaders. [Reuters](#) reported:

Spain's biggest political crisis in decades worsened on Monday night when Madrid's High Court jailed the heads of Catalonia's two main separatist groups pending an investigation for alleged sedition.

The Catalan government accused Madrid of taking "political prisoners" and one of the groups has called for peaceful demonstrations around Catalonia on Tuesday, with the biggest expected to begin in Barcelona in the evening.

Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont, in a tweet following the detentions, said: "Sadly, we have political prisoners again."

The phrase was an allusion to the military dictatorship under Francisco Franco, when Catalan culture and language were systematically suppressed. It carries an emotional resonance given fascism is still a living memory for many Spaniards.

Knowing that jail was a possibility, Omnium chief Jordi Cuixart had prerecorded a video message. It's short, powerful and inspiring.

*see: Jordi CUIXART's speech, Oct 16th – 1:44 min --
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=h1djhPw-vx4*

If you think you've seen enough, brace yourselves because it may get far more chaotic in the days ahead. If Spain's Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy goes through with his threat to invoke Article 155 on Thursday should Catalonia refuse to clarify its position on independence (it won't), it'll be the equivalent of a political nuclear bomb going off in Europe.

From the *AP*:

Spain's deputy prime minister says that Catalonia's leader didn't give an adequate response in his letter about the region's independence and has until Thursday to comply with the country's laws.

Carles Puigdemont's letter, issued two hours before a Monday deadline, didn't clarify whether he in fact declared Catalonia's independence from Spain. He called for talks with Spain's government.

Spain's central government wanted a simple "yes" or "no" answer from Puigdemont, something that Spanish Deputy Prime Minister Soraya Saenz de Santamaria said that he didn't provide.

Saenz de Santamaria said in an address to reporters that "it wasn't very difficult to say yes or no. That was the question that was asked and the response shouldn't be complicated."

She said he has until Thursday morning to fall in line, or faces the possibility of Spain activating Article 155 of the Constitution which would allow the central government to take over parts of Catalonia's self-governance.

Should the Spanish government activate Article 155, it'll mark the culmination of a perfectly played independence movement by the Catalans. This isn't to say that the road to independence, or more autonomy, will be smooth or easy from that point forward, but it will create a sense of increased solidarity amongst the Catalan people that wasn't as widespread before October 1st. Many of those who opposed independence before, or were on the fence, will come around to standing with their friends and neighbors in the face of unacceptable aggression from Madrid. The road may be a long one, but invoking Article 155 will mark the beginning of the end for Madrid.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this post, the issue of political self-determination is much bigger than Catalonia and Madrid. The Catalan struggle represents just one battle in an overall human push for freedom and voluntary associations. It's a fight in a much larger war that absolutely must be won for liberty and progress to blossom on this planet. A battle between decentralization, freedom and voluntary action, against centralization, authoritarianism and coercion.

You know where I stand.