Spread the Love: The Case for Decentralization

By Nick Robison

***Resolved: Spain should grant Catalonia its independence.***

In this case, we argue that the invocation of Article 155 has eliminated decentralization of power and violated the sanctity of elections. The case argues for giving Catalonia her independence back within the context of the Spanish state.

To win this, you do have to win the Topicality press on the word “independent,” and I really can’t help you prep there too much—that comes down to mid-round persuasiveness and understanding how to articulate theory about language. But once you win that, you can run all of the generic argumentation about why decentralization of power is good, including federalism argumentation. That’s nice, because we love that literature over here in America. The round is about decentralization=> resolution upholds decentralization=> I win.

When writing your scripts, develop a compelling narrative. Feel free to shuffle evidence between the first speech and A/T; a lot of it is versatile.

Spread the Love 2

Election Interference 2

Definition: 2

Plan: Restore regional autonomy to Catalonia by undoing the enactment of Article 155, and releasing all separatists leaders from prison. 2

Contention 1: Elections Upheld 2

Contention 2: Restoring Decentralization 3

What is decentralization? 3

Decentralization Improves Society 3

Decentralization Empowers People 3

Decentralization Improves Efficiency 4

PRO-AT or CON-AT: CaseTitle 5

A/T: Companies Leaving 5

EU Membership is Primary Concern 5

A/T: Plan allows Secession 5

A/T: Secessionists are Criminals 6

Supreme Court Unilaterally Changed the Ground Rules 6

Constitutional Court is a Political Tool 6

Impact: Under the Status Quo, courts are not adjudicators, and their rulings are biased. 6

Works Cited: CaseTitle 7

PRO: The Case for Decentralization

[Opener: Something to the effect of “elections are being messed up in Catalonia thanks to Madrid.”]

Election Interference

The Economist, 4 Jan 2018. “Spain grapples with a new Catalonian problem” <https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21733984-region-will-have-another-separatist-government-what-will-it-do-spain-grapples-new>

The election was called by Mr Rajoy in October after he assumed extraordinary constitutional powers to suspend self-government in Catalonia after a unilateral declaration of independence issued by the separatist regional administration headed by Carles Puigdemont. That in turn came after an unconstitutional independence referendum, which was further marred by police violence.

The contest took place in bizarre circumstances, with Mr Puigdemont campaigning by video link from Brussels, where he had fled to avoid a charge of rebellion. With a record turnout of 79%, the vote proved to be a qualified triumph for him and for the pro-independence coalition. On the one hand, in a symbolic blow to their cause, Ciudadanos, a centre-right anti-separatist party, became the largest political force, but with only 25% of the vote. On the other hand, the three separatist parties won a combined 47.6% of the vote, down only marginally since the last election in 2015. Because the electoral system gives a bit of extra weight to rural areas, the separatists won 70 of the 135 seats in the Catalan parliament (down from 72, but still enough for a slender majority).

State the Resolution: ***Resolved: Spain should grant Catalonia its independence.***

Definition

Independence (Dictionary.com)— freedom from the control, influence, support, aid, or the like, of others.

<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/independence>

Plan: Restore regional autonomy to Catalonia by undoing the enactment of Article 155, and releasing all separatists leaders from prison.

Contention 1: Elections Upheld

Encyclopedia Britannica. “Functions of elections” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/election-political-science/Functions-of-elections>

Elections also reinforce the stability and legitimacy of the political community. Like national holidays commemorating common experiences, elections link citizens to each other and thereby confirm the viability of the polity. As a result, elections help to facilitate social and political integration.

Finally, elections serve a self-actualizing purpose by confirming the worth and dignity of individual citizens as human beings. Whatever other needs voters may have, participation in an election serves to reinforce their self-esteem and self-respect. Voting gives people an opportunity to have their say and, through expressing partisanship, to satisfy their need to feel a sense of belonging. Even nonvoting satisfies the need of some people to express their alienation from the political community. For precisely these reasons, the long battle for the right to vote and the demand for equality in electoral participation can be viewed as the manifestation of a profound human craving for personal fulfillment.

Impact: By overturning two elections, the Spanish government has undermined these benefits of elections.

Contention 2: Restoring Decentralization

What is decentralization?

Decentralization (Dictionary.com)— to distribute the administrative powers or functions of (a central authority) over a less concentrated area

<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/decentralization?s=t>

Madrid has upset local autonomy by dissolving the legislature and arresting elected officials in favor of succession. Restoring local autonomy provides better governance, so Catalonia would be better off under regional control.

Decentralization Improves Society

Thomas Woods 2011. (Woods holds a PhD in history from Colombia University. He is an online educator and mastermind of Liberty Classroom and host of the weekly podcast The Tom Woods Show) 19 Sep 2011. “Is Centralization Inevitable” <https://tomwoods.com/is-centralization-inevitable/>

I said I would ask Donald Livingston, professor emeritus of philosophy at Emory University, about this. What follows is his reply. As usual, he doesn’t disappoint….

So what is to be said for decentralization of modern states? Since we know how destructive modern states are and have been; and since we know that large centralized states are not necessary for achieving a civilization meeting high standards of human excellence (the Greeks and Christendom are empirical examples); and since we know that small modern states are quite successful (most of the top ten states with the highest per capita income are always small states: Norway, Netherlands, Switzerland, etc.) there is good reason to pursue prudently a project of decentralization and even secession down to something as small as the states of the ancient Greek model if circumstances permitted. Hayek once said he thought liberty in the future might best be preserved in small states.

Decentralization Empowers People

John-Mary Kauzya 2005. (John-Mary Kauzya is a Ugandan diplomat who is known for his research and policy advice in the areas of governance and public administration.) “Decentralized Governance for Democracy, Peace, Development and Effective Service Delivery” <https://publicadministration.un.org/publications/content/PDFs/E-Library%20Archives/2005%20Decentralized%20Governance%20for%20Democracy,%20Peace,%20Development%20and%20Effective%20Service%20Delivery.pdf>

Viewed in this light, political decentralization (being a process of transferring decision-making power and authority) becomes a strong vehicle for championing local diversity and local autonomy. Through it, local interests are articulated, and local socio-cultural systems are strengthened. Decentralization provides a structural and institutionalized venue through which local people can participate and exert “more influence in the formulation and implementation of policies” and the determination of their development in general.4 If it is taken that democracy means the rule of the people, then political decentralization, by facilitating participation of the people in decision-making, promotes democracy.

Decentralization Improves Efficiency

Geraldo Machado 2005. (Director-General, International Centre for Innovation and Exchange in Public Administration, State of Bahia, Salvador, Brazil)“Decentralized Governance for Democracy, Peace, Development and Effective Service Delivery” <https://publicadministration.un.org/publications/content/PDFs/E-Library%20Archives/2005%20Decentralized%20Governance%20for%20Democracy,%20Peace,%20Development%20and%20Effective%20Service%20Delivery.pdf>

In conclusion, it is possible to argue that the impact of decentralization on the efficiency of the public sector has been positive. In Brazil and various Latin American and Caribbean countries, public administration still suffers from inefficiency, waste, and corruption, but the wide-spread decentralization which has occurred over the past decade has improved administrative efficiency as a whole, and also the quality of public services. Decentralization has had an important role in improved governance as well.

Impact: Bringing government closer to the people improves its efficiency.

So to restore the efficacy of voting and to improve the long-term health of Catalonian governance, please affirm the resolution.

PRO-AT: The Case for Decentralization

Constructive

A/T: Companies Leaving

EU Membership is Primary Concern

Financial Times, 15 Oct 2017 “Catalan business exodus signals deep corporate concerns” <https://www.ft.com/content/e91df296-b00d-11e7-beba-5521c713abf4>

José Luis Bonet, chief executive of leading Cava maker Freixenet, says he will recommend to his board that they move headquarters if Catalonia declares independence. “We cannot run the risk of being outside the European Union,” he adds….

The rush of companies either moving or threatening to move their legal headquarters out of Catalonia started with the region’s two largest banks, Sabadell and CaixaBank….

Both Sabadell and CaixaBank relocated their headquarters within days. People close to both banks said the decision was partially motivated by the need to provide certainty that they would remain within the EU.

Impact: Since the plan does not involve Catalonia seceding from Spain (and thereby the EU), amount of business entering and leaving Catalonia shouldn’t be affected.

A/T: Plan allows Secession

William Hunt 2017. (Founder of the St. Lawrence Solidarity project, a project founded to support democratic culture in postcommunist Europe) DISSENT, 10 Oct 2017. “The Ghost in The Ballot Box: Catalonia’s Crisis in Context” <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/catalonia-independence-referendum-crisis-history-franco>

For the past two hundred years, however, the primary objective of Catalanism has not been separation from Spain, so much as the transformation of Spain from a centralized Castilian monarchy into a pluralistic “nation of nations.” In 1932, Francesc Macià, father of modern Catalanism and first president of the revived Generalitat, proclaimed a “Catalan Republic within the Iberian Federation,” though he had to accept a more restricted autonomy. His successor Lluís Companys (revered as Catalonia’s iconic martyr after being executed by Franco) called for a “Catalan State within the Spanish Federal Republic.” Puigdemont might well settle for something similar, eventually.

The critical issue for most Catalans is the right to decide, rather than independence per se. Many Catalans who were willing to risk jail to support the referendum would have voted against separation. The irony is that if the Spanish government were to permit a free expression of opinion, a majority of Catalans, having won the right to secede, would probably not feel the need to exercise it. They would, after all, have the weapon of secession at hand should they need it in the future, because the bond with Spain would have become a voluntary union of equals. Even for many independentistas the threat of secession is primarily a blunt instrument with which to get Spain’s attention. For them to admit as much in advance, however, would be to throw the match. A “right to decide” is only meaningful when it is wrested from the force that would deny it.

A/T: Secessionists are Criminals

Supreme Court Unilaterally Changed the Ground Rules

Jose Maria Ruiz Soroa 2018. (Lawyer) El Pais, 3 Jan 2018. “The Reaction of the State” [Translated from the original Spanish by Google Translate.] <https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/01/03/opinion/1514995040_249799.html>

This is not a comment of legal nature, but strictly political. And from this perspective the surprising instruction of the case can be understood by Room 2, in which every day there is an almost magical rewriting or reinterpretation of the Catalan secessionist process. In very close collaboration with the Civil Guard, the court is "discovering" that a couple of years ago there has been a political conspiracy in Catalonia to reach secession through a process of identity excitement, government action and pseudoreferendos. And discovering this activity is at the same time repainting or characterizing it as something criminal, as incurred in the crimes of rebellion or sedition, a characterization that none of those who attended the process in his day (it was public and notorious) we even dreamed.

Thus, the Court is carrying out a radical mutation of the rules of the Spanish constitutional game. Until now, peaceful secessionism was illegal because it sought to achieve an unconstitutional result through means other than those provided for in the Constitution, but was not in itself criminal. That is why the institutions, from the government to the Constitutional, assisted defenseless, limited to making complaints about specific acts of disobedience or embezzlement. Now a very different truth advances: the process was in itself criminal, because to secede was the same as to rebel, to try to declare independence was the same as to rise violently.

Impact: the Supreme Court has made criminals out of dissenters without any change to the letter of the law, causing judicial tyranny and perversion of justice.

Constitutional Court is a Political Tool

Sam Jones 2017. (Reporter for the Guardian.) The Guardian, 6 Oct 2017. “Spanish court blocks Catalan parliament from declaring independence” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/05/spanish-pm-mariano-rajoy-warns-of-greater-harm-from-catalonia-independence-plans>

Carme Forcadell, president of the Catalan parliament, said Monday’s session had not yet been formally convened, but that the court’s decision to suspend it “harms freedom of expression and the right of initiative of members of this parliament and shows once more how the courts are being used to solve political problems.”

Impact: Under the Status Quo, courts are not adjudicators, and their rulings are biased.

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