

Catalonia's cry for secession

Why in news?

\n\n

A referendum is being planned in Catalonia following the long-standing demand for independence.

\n\n

How did the issue evolve?

\n\n



\n\n

\n

- Catalonia is an autonomous community of Spain in the north-east end of the Iberian Peninsula.

\n

- It has four provinces: Barcelona, Girona, Lleida, and Tarragona.

\n

- Catalonia was historically an autonomous region of the Iberian peninsula, which encompasses Spain and Portugal.

\n

- However, its autonomy was never recognised despite having its own language, laws, and customs.

\n

- Many sovereigns tried to impose the Spanish language and laws in order to culturally unify the kingdom.

- \n
- This fuelled Catalan separatism which was crushed under the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco in 1940s.
- \n
- However, calls for complete independence continued to grow.
- \n
- This is further amplified by economic crisis with rising unemployment and spiralling inflation.
- \n
- Separatists feel that the wealth from Barcelona region is being diverted disproportionately to other poorer provinces.
- \n

\n\n

What is the current crisis?

\n\n

- \n
- The legislature of Catalonia recently passed a law to back a supposed “Vote for Secession” to be held on the 1st of October.
- \n
- The Spanish constitutional court has swiftly declared the law illegal.
- \n
- Subsequently, the union government at Madrid is gearing itself to invoke Article 155.
- \n
- This would confer the union, extraordinary powers to suspend provincial self-governance and help prevent the referendum.
- \n
- Madrid’s hard-line stance will further stoke a defiant sentiment against the national government.
- \n
- Irrespective of the outcome of the referendum, a political confrontation is thus imminent.
- \n

\n\n

What has been EU’s reaction?

\n\n

- \n
- The EU has so far distanced itself from any secessionist demand in Spain, on the lines of how it handled the Scotland issue.
- \n

- Staying aloof on Catalonia may however cause some embarrassment to the EU as it has earlier come out strongly against attacks on democratic freedoms in Hungary and Poland.

\n

\n\n

How can the future be best approached?

\n\n

\n

- The separatist conflict is rooted in the demand for greater regional autonomy, which needs to be recognised by the Madrid establishments.

\n

- Also, Spain's austerity measures following the Euro-zone debt crisis has been highly unpopular in Catalonia.

\n

- Currently, as Madrid stares at improved economic prospects, it shouldn't be hard to strike strategic compromises with Barcelona.

\n

- Such a conciliatory stance is imperative considering the risk of a populist upsurge in a region where separatism remains a live issue.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

