Generalitat of Catalonia

Not to be confused with the equivalent and homonymous institution of the Valencian Community, called Generalitat Valenciana

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Seal of the Generalitat de Catalunya

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The Generalitat of Catalonia ("Government of Catalonia" [2]) is the institution under which the autonomous community of Catalonia is politically organised. It consists of the Parliament, the President of the Generalitat de Catalunya and the Executive Council or Government of Catalonia.

The Generalitat had responsibility for an annual budget of more than €23.9 billion in 2006, rising to more than €32.5 billion in 2010[3]

[1] gencat.cat
History

Medieval origins

The Generalitat of Catalonia stems from the medieval institution which ruled, in the name of the King of the Crown of Aragon, some aspects of the administration of the Principality of Catalonia. The first Catalan constitution is that of the Corts of Barcelona from 1283. The last was promulgated by the Corts of 1702. The Generalitat was, in the Late Middle Ages, the chief governing institution of Catalonia after the Monarch himself.

First abolition

Catalonian institutions which depended on the Generalitat were abolished in what is currently known in Catalonia as Northern Catalonia, one year after the signature of the Treaty of the Pyrenees in the 17th century, which transferred the territory from Spanish to French sovereignty.

Then, by the early 18th century, as the Decretos de Nueva Planta were passed in Spain, the institution was abolished in the Spanish territory as well.

First restoration

The Generalitat of Catalonia was restored in Spanish Catalonia and given its modern political and representative function as the regional government of Catalonia in 1932, during the Second Spanish Republic.

After the right wing coalition won the Spanish elections in 1934, the leftist leaders of the Generalitat of Catalonia rebelled against the Spanish authorities, and was temporarily suspended from 1934 to 1936.
Second abolition

In 1939, as the Spanish Civil War finished with the defeat of the Republican side, the institution was abolished and remained so during all the Francoist dictatorship.

Second restoration

The succession of presidents of the Generalitat was maintained in exile from 1939 to 1977, when Josep Tarradellas returned to Catalonia and was recognized as the legitimate president by the Spanish government. Tarradellas, when he returned to Catalonia, made his often quoted remark *Ciutadans de Catalunya: ja sóc aquí* (Citizens of Catalonia: *I am back here, now!*), reassuming the autonomous powers of Catalonia, one of the historic nationalities of present-day Spain.

After this, the powers given to the autonomous Catalan government according to the Spanish Constitution of 1978 were transferred and the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia (*Estatut d'Autonomia*) was passed after being approved both by referendum in Catalonia and by the Spanish *Cortes Generales*.
**Current status**

José Montilla is the president-elect of the Generalitat (also leader of the Socialist Party), and is backed up by a tripartite coalition of left-wing and Catalan nationalist political parties. His party actually won fewer seats in parliament than the main opposition party in the 2006 election, but as he gathered more support from MPs from other parties in the parliament, he was able to repeat the same coalition government that his predecessor (Pasqual Maragall) had formed in order to send CiU to the opposition for the first time after 23 years of Jordi Pujol’s government.

On June 18, 2006, a reformed version was approved of the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia and went into effect in August. In its inception, the reform was promoted by both the leftist parties in the government and by the main opposition party (CiU), which were united in pushing for increased devolution of powers from the Spanish government level, enhanced fiscal autonomy and finances, and explicit recognition of Catalonia's national identity; however the details of its final redaction were harshly fought and the subject became a controversial issue in the Catalan politics.

**An autonomous system of government**

The Generalitat consists of the Executive Council, the President and the Parliament. Some people wrongly apply this name only to the Council as if it were the same as Cabinet only; however, Generalitat de Catalunya is the (autonomous) Catalan system as a whole.

The region has gradually achieved a greater degree of autonomy since 1979. After Navarre and the Basque Country regions, Catalonia has the greatest level of self-government in Spain. The Generalitat holds exclusive and wide jurisdiction in various matters of culture, environment, communications, transportation, commerce, public safety and local governments. [4] In many aspects relating to education, health and justice, the region shares jurisdiction with the Spanish government. [5]

One of the examples of Catalonia's degree of autonomy is its own police force, the Mossos d'Esquadra, which is currently taking over most of the police functions in Catalonia which used to be served by the Guardia Civil and the Policía Nacional.

With few exceptions, most of the justice system is administered by national judicial institutions. The legal system is uniform throughout the Spanish State, with the exception of so-called civil law. This is administered separately within Catalonia. [6] As another institution stemming from the Generalitat, but independent from it in its check and balance functions, there is a Síndic de Greuges (ombudsman) [7] to address problems that may arise between private citizens or organizations and the Generalitat or local governments.

**International presence**

As an autonomous community of Spain, Catalonia has no recognition as a sovereign state from any UN member or any de facto state. However, as Catalonia has progressively gained a greater degree of self-government in recent years, the Catalonian Government has established nearly bilateral relationships with foreign bodies. For the most part, these relationships are with the governments of other self-styled stateless nations such as Quebec [8] or powerful sub-national administrations like California [9]. In addition, like most Spanish autonomous communities, Catalonia has permanent delegations before international organizations, such as the European Union [10] among others.
Altogether, Catalonia has well over 40 representative offices worldwide [11] [12]. Most of these offices are located in major world cities like London, New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Tokyo and others. Each office has specific duties assigned by their ministry or department agency. Generally, the functions of these are the representation of specific interests of the Government of Catalonia, trade and foreign investment, Catalan culture and language support, tourist promotion and international cooperation activities. [12] [13]

There are no specific Catalonian political institutions in Northern Catalonia, the French département of Pyrénées-Orientales. However, since September 5, 2003, there has been a Casa de la Generalitat in Perpignan, which aims to promote the Catalan culture and facilitate exchanges between each side of the Franco-Spanish border.[14]

See also

- Autonomous communities of Spain
- Composition of the Catalan Government
- List of Presidents of Catalonia
- Mancomunitat de Catalunya
- Palau de la Generalitat de Catalunya
- Spain

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[11] http://www20.gencat.cat/portal/site/Departament-de-la-Vicepresidencia/menuItem.9a6dd4d7cef8e1cf12b121577b0c0e1af0/?vgnextoid=9a588f43a9e31210VgnVCM1000008d0c0e10aRCDR&vgnextchannel=9a588f43a9e31210VgnVCM1000008d0c0e10aRCDR&vgnnextfmt=default
[13] http://www20.gencat.cat/portal/site/Departament-de-la-Vicepresidencia/menuItem.1bd9513103ff0c512b121577b0c0e1af0/?vgnextoid=d586d2bd5ce31210VgnVCM1000008d0c0e10aRCDR&vgnextchannel=d586d2bd5ce31210VgnVCM1000008d0c0e10aRCDR&vgnnextfmt=default
Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia

The Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia provides Catalonia's basic institutional regulations. It defines the rights and obligations of the citizens of Catalonia (Spain), the political institutions of the Catalan nationality, their competences and relations with the rest of Spain, and the financing of the Government of Catalonia.\[1\]

This Law was approved by referendum 18 June 2006 and supplants the Statute of Sau, which dated from 1979.

History

In 1919, a first project of Statute was started by the Mancomunitat de Catalunya (the Commonwealth of Catalonia).

In 1928, a project of Constitution was written in Havana by exiled Catalonian nationalists.

Catalonia first obtained a Statute of Autonomy in 1932, during the Second Spanish Republic. This law was abolished by General Francisco Franco after the Spanish Civil War, largely because Catalonia had been a region generally opposed to Franco's Nacionales forces. During periods of his rule, public usage of the Catalan language and culture, and more specifically, Catalan self-government were harshly suppressed.

In 1979, during the Spanish transition to democracy, the second Statute was approved by referendum.

On June 18, 2006, a referendum amending the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia of 1979 to further expand the authority of the Generalitat de Catalunya, Catalonia's government, was approved, and became effective on 9 August 2006.

This referendum was noted for its unprecedented low voter turnout well below 50%. It was also noted for its uneasy forging, since tensions regarding its final edit within the coalition government which originally promoted the Statute led to an early regional election in 2006.

Data

- The 1931 referendum on the Statute of Autonomy registered a voter turnout of 75.13%, of which 99.49% voted favourably to its passing, according to the official results released.
- The 1979 referendum on the Statute of Autonomy registered a voter turnout of 59.7%, of which 88.1% voted favorably.\[2\]
- The 2006 referendum on the current version of the Statute registered a voter turnout of 48.85%.\[3\] Of the total votes, 73.24% were in favour of the new Statute, while 20.57% were against.

Self-government under the statute

Catalonia is an Autonomous Community within the Kingdom of Spain, with the status of historical region in the Spanish Constitution of 1978. In September 2005, the Parliament of Catalonia approved the definition of Catalonia as a 'nation' in the preamble\[4\] of the new Statute of Autonomy (autonomous basic law). The 120 delegates of all parties (CiU, PSC, ERC, ICV-EA) with the exception of the 15 delegates of the Partido Popular approved this definition. In the opinion of the Spanish Government this has a 'declaratory' but not a 'legal' value, since the Spanish Constitution recognises the indissoluble "unity of the Spanish Nation".

The Generalitat de Catalunya is the institution in which the self-government of Catalonia is politically organised. It consists of the Parliament, the President of the Generalitat and the Executive Council or Government of Catalonia.

The Statute of Autonomy gives the Generalitat of Catalonia the powers which enable it to carry out the functions of self-government. These can be exclusive, concurrent and shared with the Spanish State or executives.\[5\] The Generalitat holds jurisdiction in various matters of culture, education, health, justice, environment, communications,
transportation, commerce, public safety and local governments. Catalonia has its own police force, the Mossos d'Esquadra, although the Spanish government keep agents in the region for matters relating to border control, terrorism and immigration.

Most of the justice system is administered by Spanish judicial institutions. The legal system is uniform throughout Spain, with the exception of so-called "civil law", which is administered separately within Catalonia.\[^6\]

**Criticism**

A number of intellectuals critical of Catalan nationalism have pointed out what they describe as an "identity obsession"\[^7\] amongst most Catalan politicians and the media establishment. They quote the unprecedently high abstention in the referendum regarding the Statute as a symptom of those cited sectors being out of synch with the populace at large. On the opposite side, Catalan left-wing separatists, such as ERC or C.U.P, think that the statute does not give Catalonia sufficient self government. They cite the high abstention as evidence that Catalans desired further self-government but felt disappointed with what the statute offered.

As a result of this trend in opinion, a new political party sprung up Ciutadans - Partido de la Ciudadanía. It entered the Catalan Parliament after the 2006 Catalan Parliament election, held soon after the Statute was passed, gaining three seats and thus becoming the sixth political party with representation in this Parliament.

**Legal challenge & the Catalans' response**

The Statute has been legally contested by the surrounding Autonomous Communities of Aragon, Balearic Islands and the Valencian Community,\[^8\] as well as by the Partido Popular (the main opposition party at the Spanish Parliament). The objections are based on various topics such as disputed cultural heritage but, especially, on the Statute's alleged breaches of the “solidarity between regions” principle in fiscal and educational matters enshrined by the Spanish Constitution of 1978.

The Catalan political arena largely viewed this debate as a sort of cultural war waged by "Spanish nationalists" (espanyolistes in Catalan). In response, four of the six political parties represented at the Catalan parliament—Convergence and Union, the Catalan Socialists, Republican Left of Catalonia, and Catalan green party—reached an agreement to fight together at the Spanish Senate to reform the Constitutional Court of Spain, and hopefully nullify the possibility of an overturn of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy.\[^9\] This pact was particularly interesting because, aside from the fact that they all pertain to various degrees of Catalan nationalism, the four parties differ greatly in political ideology, and together, they form nearly 80% of the Catalan Parliament.\[^10\] However, this attempt was largely unsuccessful.

The Constitutional Court of Spain assessed the constitutionality of the challenged articles and its binding assessment was released on June 28 of 2010. By a 6 to 4 majority, the Court's justices rewrote 14 articles and dictated the interpretation for 27 more, mainly relating to language, justice and fiscal policy. The judgment reassured that the term "nation" used in the preamble has no legal standing. Overall, the judgment left 95% of the originally ballot-approved Statute otherwise constitutional.\[^11\]
See also

- Catalonia
- Generalitat de Catalunya
- Autonomous communities of Spain
- Spanish transition to democracy
- Statute of Autonomy
- 2010 Catalan autonomy protest

External links

- Full text of the 2006 Statute[^12] (in PDF)
- Full text of the 2006 Statute[^13]

Politics of Catalonia

Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia series

- Statute of 1919
- Provisional Republic of 1928
- Project of 1932
- Statute of 1932
- Statute of 1979
- New Statute

References

[^4]: Preamble of the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia (http://www.gencat.net/generalitat/eng/estatut/preambul.htm), Generalitat of Catalonia
[^10]: http://www.parlament.cat/web/composicio/distribucio-escons
[^13]: http://www.gencat.net/generalitat/eng/estatut/index.htm
[^14]: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5091572.stm
2010 Catalan autonomy protest

The 2010 Catalan autonomy protest was a demonstration in central Barcelona on 10 July 2010 against limitations of the autonomy of Catalonia with Spain, and particularly against a recent decision of the Spanish Constitutional Court to annul or reinterpret several articles of the 2006 Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia. The number of people taking part in the demonstration was estimated at between 1.1 million (according to the police) and 1.5 million (according to the organisers), at 56,000-62,000 according to a private company, Lynce. Madrid-based newspaper El País estimated the number of demonstrators at 425,000. The mobilisation was described as "unprecedented" by the mayor of Barcelona. The Barcelona daily newspaper El Periódico de Catalunya described it as "without a doubt one of the biggest [protest] marches that has [ever] occurred in Catalonia, possibly the biggest".

The demonstration was led by a banner with the slogan in Catalan Som una nació. Nosaltres decidim. (in English, "We are a nation. We decide.").

Background

The promise of a new Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia was a key promise by Socialist candidate José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in the run-up to the 2003 Catalan parliamentary election and the 2004 Spanish general elections. The new Statute was approved by the Parliament of Catalonia, by the Cortes Generales (parliament of Spain), albeit in a modified form, and finally by the electors of Catalonia in a referendum on 18 June 2006 (73.24% in favour on a turnout of 48.85%).
Almost immediately, the opposition Spanish nationalist People’s Party launched a legal challenge to declare much of the new Statute unconstitutional.[3] The opinion of the judges in the Constitutional Court was divided between "progressives", who felt the Statute was basically in line with Spain's 1978 Constitution, and "conservatives", who felt the Statute gave Catalonia far too much autonomy and so threatened the unity of the Spanish State. The debate went on for four years, with one judge dying in the meantime and four other judges continuing long after their terms of office had theoretically come to an end. A compromise was finally reached on 28 June 2010, and passed by six votes to four. The summary judgment published the same day revealed that the Court had declared parts of 14[7] out of 277 articles unconstitutional and would submit 27 more to "interpretation". The full judgment was released on 9 July 2010.[8]

**Organisation of the protest**

The protest was organised by the prominent Catalan cultural organisation Òmnium Cultural with the public support of about 1,600 other organisations,[2] including four out of the six political parties represented in the Parliament of Catalonia (representing more than 85% of votes at the last parliamentary election), the two main trade unions (CCOO and UGT), the main employers' federation (Cipec), and F.C. Barcelona.[3]

The march had been planned to start at 18:00 CEST (16:00 UTC) at the junction between the Avinguda Diagonal and the Passeig de Gràcia 41°23'47"N 2°09'34"E. It was then to have descended the Passeig de Gràcia to its junction with the Gran Via, before turning left and finishing at the Plaça de Tetuan 41°23'41"N 2°10'32"E, a distance of about 2 kilometres (1¼ miles).
Events on the day

Well before 18:00, crowds had started to press down the Passeig de Gràcia from Diagonal, and many people were still moving up from the Plaça de Catalunya along both the Passeig de Gràcia and the parallel Rambla de Catalunya. The official "front" of the march, with its 25 m by 10 m (83 ft by 33 ft) Senyera (flag of Catalonia), eventually managed to form at the junction of the Passeig de Gràcia with Carrer d’Aragó 41°23’32”N 2°09’53”E, and started moving at around 18:20,[2] albeit moving through dense crowds. By 19:30, it had only reached the Gran Via 41°23’22”N 2°10’06”E, a distance of about 400 metres.[3] The organisers decided to perform the closing act – the singing of Els Segadors (the Catalan anthem) and the reading of a short manifesto – in a packed Plaça de Tetuan despite the absence of the official “head” of the march, and the demonstration started to disperse at around 20:00.[3]

See also

- Catalonia
- Autonomous communities of Spain
- Catalan nationalism

External links

- The Demonstration web [9] Somunanació.cat (Catalan)
- Aerial video footage of the demonstration [10]
- 360º photography of the demonstration [11]

References

[3] "Un millón de personas inundan Barcelona en una histórica manifestación de rechazo a la sentencia contra el Estatut" (http://www.lavanguardia.es/politica/noticias/20100710/53961206706/un-millon-de-personas-inundan-barcelona-en-una-historica-manifestacion--de-rechazo-a-la-sentencia-co.html), La Vanguardia, 10 July 2010,
THE WORLD; Spain woes a separatist plus?;
Many in Catalonia believe Madrid gives the region short shrift and resent the new austerity measures.


Abstract (Summary)
Why? Because we have been paying for [the rest of] Spain more than others, said Oriol Pujol, the spokesman for Convergence and Union, an autonomy-minded opposition party that could take power after the elections this fall.

The economy is flailing, unemployment is sky-high and painful government cutbacks lie ahead. Now is the time, it would seem, for the people of Spain to pull together.

To Joan Puigcercos, it's all the more reason to split up.

A resident of wealthy Catalonia here in the sunny northeastern corner of the country, Puigcercos blames Spain's economic woes on the government in Madrid and what he sees as its irresponsible and discriminatory ways.

For years, he says, officials blithely spent huge sums on welfare checks and subsidies for poorer parts of Spain, using plenty of tax money from Catalonia, while ignoring the region's needs for better infrastructure and quality public services. So now when he hears Madrid preaching the need for austerity and sacrifice from all, a different solution beckons.

"Either we give in to the politics that have always happened with the Spanish government, or we try to become an independent state," said Puigcercos, the leader of the Republican Left of Catalonia, one of the political parties in the region's ruling coalition.

Those are fighting words in a region that already holds itself aloof from the rest of Spain. But their appeal threatens to intensify during an economic crunch that deepens Catalonians' feelings of being forced to pay for the mistakes of others. It's a problem with echoes across Europe. Drastic budget cuts to undo years of carefree spending are already tugging at the threads that knit societies together, as workers lose jobs and public
services from healthcare to libraries get slashed.

But for Spain and a few other nations, the official penny-pinching also risks aggravating tensions within their borders. In Britain, Scotland chafes against its ties to England, with nationalists urging a referendum on independence. In Italy, the prosperous north throws up its hands at being yoked to, in its view, the lazy, profligate south. French-speaking Walloons and Dutch-speaking Flemish bicker in Belgium.

In Catalonia, separatist sentiment has simmered for decades, fueled by the belief that the region's needs and interests, as well as its distinctive language and culture, are given short shrift by the establishment in Madrid. The region already enjoys a measure of autonomy under an official arrangement with the Spanish government, but many here say it's not enough.

Now, Madrid's austerity measures loom just as Catalonia's independentistas are turning more and more to economic arguments to bolster their case. Residents grumble that they contribute more than their fair share to the public purse, but that too little of it returns in the form of public investment or services. A 2007 study said Catalonia gave about $9 billion more in revenue a year to the central government than it got back.

In one oft-cited example, residents allege that schoolchildren in the poor region of Extremadura have more computers in their classrooms -- with the help of money from Catalonia -- than students here at home.

The region has long pressed for better highways and railways because of its status as Spain's biggest exporter. But infrastructure projects across the country are likely to be put on ice as part of the government's cutbacks.

"The first figures that we have seen [show] that the proportion of cutting in Catalonia is bigger than the average for Spain.... We're going to be hurt more," said Muriel Casals, the president of a Catalan cultural organization in Barcelona, the regional capital. "We've been having these kinds of blows for a long time in history, and it's for that that we are so sensitive."

Her organization, Omnium Cultural, sent a wakeup call to the central government last month by staging the biggest show of anti-Madrid feeling in years, a protest of a ruling by Spain's constitutional court that invalidated parts of the official charter granting Catalonia some autonomy.

Hundreds of thousands of residents, many of them waving Catalan independence flags, marched through the streets of Barcelona. In an act
practically tantamount to high treason, some protesters wore Dutch soccer jerseys to urge on the Netherlands in the World Cup final against Spain. (The Spanish team, which included several Catalan players, triumphed anyway.)

Elections for Catalonia's assembly this year are likely to feature harsher anti-Madrid rhetoric, with the government's austerity plan offering a convenient whetstone on which to sharpen regional resentment.

"It's time to tighten our belts, but it's time for some people to do it more than others. Why? Because we have been paying for [the rest of] Spain more than others," said Oriol Pujol, the spokesman for Convergence and Union, an autonomy-minded opposition party that could take power after the elections this fall. Up to the mid-1990s, nationalists such as Pujol relied on romantic notions of a shared identity to enlist the support of their fellow Catalanians for greater self-rule, said Joan Botella, a professor of political science at the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

Since then, however, hundreds of thousands of migrants from other parts of Spain have settled in Catalonia, diluting the old-fashioned sense of Catalan solidarity.

So the rhetoric calling for more autonomy, or even a referendum on independence, has shifted. Newcomers from Andalusia or Aragon may shrug at warm-hearted appeals to protect Catalan culture, but they respond to hardheaded arguments about their tax money being spent on schools or hospitals far from Catalonia.

The euro debt crisis and Spain's economic troubles, including an unemployment rate of nearly 20%, only increase the resentment. "There are many more pro-independence people who say that the crisis wouldn't happen if we were not part of Spain," Botella said.

If Catalonians had more control over the purse strings, there would be more public investment in research and development, to keep attracting talent from all over Europe, said Puigcercos of the Republican Left of Catalonia party. He and others would also like to see the region's seaports and airports upgraded to handle more international traffic -- to Asia, for example -- which would increase Catalonia's reach as an exporter.

But as long as they remain part of Spain, many residents see little chance of this happening. "They keep saying no," said Pujol of the Convergence and Union party. "So there's nothing to do but jump over the wall and push for independence."