

# The Impact of Separation of States to the Map of Europe: The Cases of Scotland and Catalonia

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**Abstract**— Recently we have been witnesses of several attempts for secession on European soil. Some of them actually happened (the case of secession of Kosovo from Serbia); the case of Scotland has been characterized with a referendum in 2014 where the Scottish people declared against secession from the United Kingdom and the case of Catalonia where the Catalans still did not have a chance to declare about possible secession from Spain. However, the legal discussion of secession is informed primarily by the rise of self-determination as legal principle, so in fact they both are considered as important issues in international affairs. Secession as the manner of groups or regions sought to secede from their current governments in order to establish their own political entities. This article aims to describe the impact that secession can make to the map of Europe (regarding its territorial implications), the positive and negative effects and what a region that secedes may win or lose and all of that seen through the cases of Scotland and Catalonia.

**Keywords** –secession, self-determination, independence, separation of states, territorial dispute, international conflict, referendum

## 1 INTRODUCTION

When secession is a subject of international (not only national) debate it raises questions which concerns the whole public. In that manner we should ask ourselves: Should secession be easy and maybe prescribed in the constitution of one state or in other international instruments such as: declarations or conventions and covenants?

With the lack of a legal definition of secession, it is quite difficult to define the right to secession in couple of words. In the context of international law and relations, secession can be defined as: “*withdrawal of territory (colonial or non-colonial) from part of an existing state to create a new state*” [1] The etymological concept of the word ‘secession’ lies in the Latin terms “*se*” meaning “*apart*” and “*cedere*” meaning “*to go*”[2].

Secession can be described as an attempt to resolve domestically based territorial dispute by dividing a country’s homeland into new, secessionist and rump states [3]. When we discuss about the right to secede, the most important is the sole process of secession: the peaceful versus violent secessions process affects on different ways and bring different consequences.

Secession is the creation of a new independent entity through the separation of part of the territory and population of an existing State, without the consent of the latter. The lack of consent of the predecessor State is the key element that characterises a strict notion of secession. At the same time, this factor explains why secession is so controversial in international law [4]. In that context, the relationship between secession and international law is a subject that has long attracted the interest of jurisprudence. The emergence of a new State to the detriment of an older sovereign entity disrupts the composition of international society and challenges the very foundations of its main actors

In the context of secession, the practical political problem goes especially deep. The right to secede is different from other potential vetoes on national legislative action precisely because it raises fundamental and often emotional issues having to do

with the claims of ethnicity, territory, and history to separation and selfdetermination [5] What do the supporters of secession want to achieve, apart from (or in addition to) the independence of the territory that they claim from the state in which they live at present, the state which we shall call (without any prejudice) their ‘host state’? They want to be ruled by or governed a different group of people – usually those who belong to the same national group as they do [6].

In the world in which secessions do happen, it has been left to the scholars to debate not only the question of what detachment of territory from a state counts as secession but also the question of whether the means and the effects that can cause in inter-state relations in the cases of such attempts at territorial detachment or not.

It must be emphasized that there are clear benefits and hidden costs to the ease of secession implied in the consent (or compact) theory of political obligation. One benefit is that if a government must command consent in order to be legitimate, then governmental officials will channel their efforts into those actions most likely to induce citizens consent. A government premised on consent must be responsive to citizen’s desires, and this clearly resonates with the widely shared presumption in favor of democracy [7].

## 2. Secession and self-determination as important issues in international affairs

Secession and self-determination are two of the most contested issues in international affairs. The legal discussion of secession is informed primarily by the rise of self-determination as a legal principle.

Political philosophers derive the right of secession either from the right of self-determination or from the right of resistance against injustice. The choice between these two justifications makes a big difference. While the right of self-determination may justify an unconditional right of secession, the right of resistance

presupposes that the government has violated its legal obligations [8]. Speaking about the issue of self-determination and secession, Allen Buchman has accepted the right of secession only as "a remedial right" and according to his opinion [9]:

*"A group can have the requisite valid claim to territory:*

- (a) by reclaiming territory over which they were sovereign but which was unjustly taken from them (as with the Baltic Republics' secession from the Soviet Union in 1991) or*
- (b) By claiming sovereignty over the territory as a last resort remedy against serious and persistent injustices, understood as violations of basic human rights".*

The principle of self-determination has been considered as a cornerstone in the normative development in the field of human rights [10]. The claim to self-determination often encapsulates the hopes of ethnic peoples and other groups for freedom and independence. It provides a powerful focus for national fervor, and it offers a convenient tool for ethnic entrepreneurs seeking to mobilize populations and fighters in pursuit of a secessionist cause [11]. Indeed, the principle of self-determination has been subject to a conceptual evolution which began in post-Second World War era and accelerated in 1960's due to the decolonization process. This evolution pertains to the transformation of self-determination which was firstly conceived as a political principal to a peremptory legal norm i.e. *jus cogens* [12]. The United Nations has endorsed the concept that subjugated groups have the right to 'replace their status' with one of freedom and Article 15 of the UNDHR affirms nationality as a fundamental right [13]. From the point of international law, nationality and self-determination are the rights of individuals as well as solidarity or collective rights, as the Civil and Political Covenant indicates.

Since the adoption of the United Nations Charter, the United Nations has adopted several legal instruments significantly endorsing the right of self-determination [14]. For example, General Assembly Resolution 1514 [15] states that:

1. *The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and co-operation.*
2. *All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.*

Six years later, the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was adopted, stating that:

*All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.*

The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights makes the identical statement. Additionally, General Assembly Resolution 2625 [16] states that:

*By virtue of the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples enshrined in the Charter of the UN, all peoples have the right freely to determine, with-*

*out external interference, their political status and to pursue their economic social and cultural development, and every State has the duty to respect this right in accordance with the provisions of the Charter.*

As it was mentioned before, foundational documents of international law make reference to the right of a people to govern themselves, the most prominent examples being the League of Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) and the Declaration of the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. These documents each expand the legal claims of self-determination to all peoples. It therefore becomes imperative to genealogically trace the right of self-determination, and to determine under what circumstances peoples may seek external sovereignty and not merely internal arrangements [17]. The UN documents pointedly neither prohibit nor allow the use of force and the breach of territorial integrity for the purposes of secession (as distinct from decolonization); the word 'secession' and its possible cognates is absent from the UN documents [18].

According to the above mentioned, the United Nation Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States [19] in its Article 2 (II) (f) states:

*The duty of a State to refrain from the promotion, encouragement or support, direct or indirect, of rebellious or secessionist activities within other States, under any pretext whatsoever, or any action which seeks to disrupt the unity or to undermine or subvert the political order of other States.*

The principle of self-determination has numerous meanings. This indicates a right to democratic participation for individuals which can be derived from the doctrine of self-determination, group rights and certain additional human rights entitlement for minorities and for indigenous peoples [20]. But, however, governments have simultaneously ensured that the legal right to self-determination, at least in the sense of secession, is strictly rationed and cannot ever be invoked against the state they represent.

The biggest problem in relation to the principle of self-determination and afterwards with the question about possible secession is: How to create a new (secessionist) state that will satisfy the required criteria according to the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States?

The declaratory, constitutive and constitutive-collective recognition theories hold that a putative state must satisfy the four criteria enumerated in Article 1 of the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States [21], which stipulates the following:

*The state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications:*

- (a) a permanent population;*
- (b) a defined territory;*
- (c) government; and*
- (d) capacity to enter into relations with other states.*

Although these four criteria have been generally regarded as orthodoxy, an additional fifth criterion—*independence*—has also been widely held as essential to the satisfaction of the criteria for statehood based on effectiveness, and is thus common to proponents of the declaratory, constitutive and constitutive-collective recognition theories. Hence, this fifth criterion (*independence*) is causing problems and self-determination conflicts which lead to the process of secession.

Hence, a conclusion can be made upon the fact that the classical right of self-determination is an individual right – not the right of a majority. The classical right of self-determination is an individual right – not the right of a majority.

### 3. What kind of consequences can secession bring to the map of Europe?

Throughout the course of history, there are few regions in the world whose map has changed as frequently and abruptly as that of Europe. Secessionism is on the rise all across Europe, with movements in search of both independence from their central governments and accession to the European Union.

Sometimes secession is a result of disagreement of a territorial nature and concerns territorial dispute with domestic origin. If the country is divided it leads to the creation of new international boundaries. The new boundaries separate two or more internationally recognized countries that formerly belonged to the same state [22]. In that manner, the creation of new borders is changing not only the secessionist and the rump state, but also the neighboring states and the whole continent.

Secession process may produce positive or negative consequences. If people in the seceding region are overwhelmingly in favor of secession and if people in the other regions of the state are hardly affected, the overall consequences are likely to be positive. If, however, the seceding region includes a large ethnic, racial or religious minority which will be ruthlessly suppressed or if the seceding state is going to start aggressive wars against its neighbors, secession may have negative consequences [23].

A right to secede will encourage strategic behavior, that is, efforts to seek benefits or diminish burdens by making threats that are strategically useful and based on power over matters technically unrelated to the particular question at issue.

The map of Europe in these past decades has been dramatically changed. Several states have been broken into smaller, following the breakup of Czechoslovakia, the dissolution of Yugoslavia i.e. with the creation of six republics who actually were created by the process of secession, unfortunately followed by violence [24]. In this context we must mention the fractionation of the former Soviet Union into numerous independent countries. This process of secession had its basis in the Constitution and because of that reason it was a peaceful secession. According to Article 72 of the Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: “Each Union Republic shall retain the right to secede from the USSR”.

The secession process does not cause only territorial changes, but also opens the question about the protection of minorities’ rights. However, the protection of minorities in the seceding state is even less of a problem if the predecessor state and the seceding state belong to an international organization that enforces human rights in its member states. The European Union has adopted a Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the Court of Justice has decided quite arbitrarily that these rights are not limited to the application of EU law, but are valid in the whole domain that is subject to EU law [25]. In that relation, Article 7 (3) of the Treaty of the European Union (hereinafter TEU) states that:

*... the Council, acting by a qualified majority, may decide to suspend certain of the rights deriving from the application of the Treaties to the Member State in question, including the voting rights of the representative of the government of that Member State in the Council. In doing so, the Council shall take into account the possible consequences of such a suspension.*

According to the previously stated, article 2 of TEU includes the respect of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights including the right of person belonging to minorities.

The issue of a possible secession is producing a lot of controversies about the status of the new seceding state. For example, the United Nations do not recognize the right of secession. A seceding state usually ceases to be a member. It has to file an application if it wishes to become a member.

The Rule 134 of the Rules of Procedures, adopted by the United Nations declares that:

*Any State which desires to become a Member of the United Nations shall submit an application to the Secretary-General. Such application shall contain a declaration, made in a formal instrument that the State in question accepts the obligations contained in the Charter.*

Hence, we can get a closure that the main precondition for a membership to the United Nations is having a status of a state. Similar preconditions have been prescribed by the European Union [26]. According to the EU law:

*Any country that satisfies the conditions for membership can apply. These conditions are known as the 'Copenhagen criteria' and include a free-market economy, a stable democracy, the rule of law, and the acceptance of all EU legislation, including of the euro.*

In relation to the provisions emphasized above, in the case of future possible secession, Scotland and Catalonia would have to re-apply for EU membership. In November 2012, Jose Manuel Barroso – President of the EU Commission declared that “a region which secedes from a member state, automatically ceases to be part of the European Union”. This statement actually has been confirmed before couple of years when Mr.Prodi on the

behalf of European Commission [27] in 2004 gave his answer as follows:

*When a part of the territory of a Member State ceases to be a part of that state, e.g. because that territory becomes an independent state, the treaties will no longer apply to that territory. In other words, a newly independent region would, by the fact of its independence, become a third country with respect to the Union and the treaties would, from the day of its independence, not apply anymore on its territory.*

The break-up of states has international implications and especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has become a concern for the European Union. The EU has sought to influence secession outcomes in processes as diverse as the independence of the Baltic States from the Soviet Union and the separation of regions in Georgian and Ukraine [28]. The creation of a new independent entity through the separation of part of the territory and population of an existing State raises serious difficulties as to the role of international law.

The new trends of secession and endorsing the principle of self-determination have changed the territorial map of Europe and this map will be changed in future if the secession of Scotland from the United Kingdom and Catalonia from Spain happens. Also the situation in Europe is complicated enough with the cases of Basque Country and Crimea. Among the newer members of the European Union, territorial autonomy remains a highly sensitive issue and few autonomy arrangements have been adopted.

#### **4. Scotland and the issue of possible secession from the United Kingdom**

The struggle for secession of Scotland from the United Kingdom has been a very actual issue in the 2014 and after the results of the referendum held on 18 September 2014 when the majority of Scottish people declared against the independence of Scotland. After this referendum the question about possible Scottish independence has been put on 'status quo', but the results of the referendum in the United Kingdom in June 2016 held about 'Brexit' – or the issue about leaving from the EU and withdrawing the EU membership, it seems will change the climate about the issue of Scottish secession. Namely the Brexit positive result may open and reactivate the question about secession of Scotland from the UK because it is obviously that Scotland does not want to leave the EU family.

But first of all, we need to go from the beginning and explain the whole situation, the Scottish self-determination issue and the desire for secession.

In January 2012, a dispute arose between the governments at Westminster and Holyrood over the process to be adopted to instigate the constitutional change. This dispute brought the complex relationship between law and politics in the British constitution to the forefront of public discourse. Scotland's ambiguous constitutional status, initiated by the union of Scotland

and England in 1707, kept alive through an independent legal system and nationalist tendencies, and exacerbated by devolution in 1998, adds further complication to the issue of independence and the appropriate process for achieving that independence [29]. In fact, the first step towards Scottish independence is actually the Scotland Act 1998, who brings a new dynamic to the British Constitution. Establishing a devolved administration in Edinburgh has created a clear division between the legal sovereignty of Westminster and the political sovereignty of the Scottish people [30]. Legal sovereignty is undoubtedly retained; the Scottish Parliament is therefore constitutionally subordinate to Westminster. However, this retention of unlimited legislative power has lost its political substance. Westminster no longer commands political authority over matters within the competence of the Scottish Parliament.

The two major Scottish political parties – Scottish National Party (SNP) and Scottish Green Party (SGP) argue that the Scottish independence is not territorially disputed. The Anglo-Scottish border has remained stable since the Treaty of York in 1237 and there is no argument about the territory claimed by secessionist parties. According to SNP secession would entail full sovereignty within the European Union; however the creation of a new Scottish State would not mean breaking every relationship with the UK. The political union would be replaced by a social union, a new relationship with the rest of the UK, keeping the Crown and probably the currency [31].

The liberal conception of democracy can easily be used to promote the right of independence for Scotland. Liberals grant individuals the right to decide their political relationships and this determines the way that issues of representation, secession and sovereignty are addressed [32]. According to the above stated, Scotland would have the right to become independent if referendum was to be held and the outcome of the referendum worked in favor for the nationalists.

Hence, this means that although the UK Government opposes Scottish independence is still allowing the Scottish people to vote on the matter. The Scottish and the UK Government reached a settlement – 'The Edinburgh Agreement' in October 2012 which states that if the Scottish people would vote to become independent, everyone would respect this outcome [33].

Subsequently, on 18 September 2014, the Scots were asked to vote regarding the referendum question 'Should Scotland be an independent country?'. The results from the referendum surprised the Scottish political parties having in mind the fact that approximately 55.3% of Scots voted NO and the rest of them or 44.7% were for YES [34]. The turnout of 84.6 % was the highest turnout at a nationwide referendum or parliamentary election in Scotland since the establishment of universal suffrage. The very high turnout reflected the considerable level of voter engagement with a referendum campaign which had lasted for over two years. The significance of the referendum and its outcome has been confirmed by the reaction to the result not only in Scotland but in the rest of the UK, with greater levels of interest in the way the Union is governed and the potential for the further devolution of power down to localities in each nation of UK [35].

A No vote meant that it was the first time anyone in Britain has voted for the Union at a referendum and the result points to an endorsement of Scotland in the Union of a sort that there has never been before. That was a powerful demonstration of a constitutional choice by Scots; it conferred a degree of legitimacy and authority on the union that it has not had in the democratic age [36]. The referendum results point on a completely different situation. Most Scots regard themselves primarily as Scottish but still have a strong sense of 'Britishness' through political behavior and shared historical memory [37]. Mainly, this opinion and point of view of things lead to a referendum results according to which the most of the Scots declared against independence i.e. against secession so they decided to stay as a part of the UK.

Although two presumptions of the referendum results have been analyzed, the Scottish NO to the secession from the UK led to further devolution of the powers to the Scottish Parliament. Namely, the Smith Commission Agreement published on 27 November 2014 (achieved with an agreement between the UK Government and the Scottish Government) proposes substantial new powers which will be transferred to the Scottish Parliament.

Although the Scottish secession question has been put on 'status quo' till now, it is quite probable that the question could be re-activated after the Brexit referendum. What will happen regarding this issue has been left to the time and other factors.

## 5. The efforts of Catalonia to become the new independent state on European soil

Constitutional debate on independence has been issue in Catalonia because secession is explicitly forbidden by law. The Autonomous Community of Catalonia has not right to secede neither the right to hold a referendum on this issues. Spanish legality rules out any hypothetical secession of an Autonomous Community or any region of the national territory.

This strong point of view about the Catalan issue can be found in the Spanish Constitution where Article 2 and 8 are proclaiming the indissolubility of the Spanish nation and the right of the Armed Forces to guarantee the 'territorial integrity of the State'. According to Article 478 of the Spanish Criminal Code, secession has been categorized at the same level of 'rebellion offence' [38]. This position of Spain supported in the legislation acts has been confirmed when the Constitutional Court in 2008 ruled out the possibility of secession or a referendum on this issue for the Basque case. In May 2010 the Constitutional Court decided to trim the Catalan Statute of Autonomy. The decision took place following four years of controversial debate [39]

Catalonia has often been described by the Catalan secessionist in two complementary ways: first, as a nation with its specific character build around common language and history; second, as an oppressed people in a liberal democratic context. Catalan identity is historically anchored in a struggle for recognition within the Spanish framework. More specifically, this struggle is strongly linked to the preservation and promotion of the Catalan language which has been subject to much suppression throughout the history of Spain.

Catalonia has a long-established national identity. It was among the first regions to regain autonomy in 1979 after the end of Franco's dictatorship. A regional parliament was established in 1980, with a high degree of self-governance, including responsibility for healthcare and education, and the right to run its own police force. Since then, there has been ongoing friction over the degree of self-government, particularly financial, as well as linguistic and cultural issues.

Catalanism, or the name which was given to the movement of national vindication that advocates for political- cultural recognition of Catalonia became popular not only in Spain, but in all Europe. The survival and persistence of Catalanism is due to the Catalan loss of its institutions during the XIX and the beginning of the XX century i.e. in several periods and the last one was in 1980 [40].

Maybe, one of the reasons why Spain is against the Catalan independence is the fact that Catalonia is one of the Spain's richest regions and the Catalonia's fiscal contribution to the rest of Spain is long-standing, persistent and sizeable. Many Catalans believe their region transfers an unfair and disproportionate amount of money to the central government and Spain's poorest regions.

The fact of being a permanent minority within the Spanish State with no institutional mechanisms correcting this situation, and therefore having an institutional recognition at the same level of any other Autonomous Community is considered oppressive by *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC)* and *Solidaritat Catalan per la Independència (SCI)* – the two officially secessionist groups [41].

Over the past years the support for secession and pro-secessionist movements within Catalonia has increased. Catalan nationalist parties unambiguously sought to 'construct Catalonia as a new state within the European framework' an ambition that was also articulated during mass rallies, like in September 2012, a massive demonstration collapsed the streets of Barcelona. The mass rally called to demand independence for Catalonia under the slogan "Catalonia, a new state in Europe". Catalan independence campaigners expected the EU to take a flexible approach as a result of for Catalonia's long-standing EU membership and the *sui generis* nature of the independence processes. In an appeal to the "democratic principles" of the EU, Catalan pro-independence campaigners argued that the EU could not deny Catalans their status as EU citizens because they already formed part of the EU. The Catalan government also argued that the EU would not hesitate to accept Catalonia as a member given its economic strength [42].

Regarding the issue of Catalan independence followed with the Catalanism and the struggle for secession from Spain, one question should be asked: *Is the Catalan political movement temporary or it is a long-term which could bring a broad and historical political movement?* First of all, it must be emphasized that Catalan nationalism had never been characterized by secessionist claims; in fact very few Catalans wanted full independence from Spain. According to this the nationalism in Catalonia was never secessionist, but the last few years and maybe the

economic crisis which had an impact on Spain opened and affirmed the question about possible Catalan independence. A very important segment of this issue is also the Catalan movement – Catalanism which is characterized with no monopolism by a single political party – it is a feeling that is shared by different segments of society, covering various social classes with a desire Catalonia to become independent state.

Catalan nationalism has usually been justified its demands by rooting them in the distinct cultural identity of Catalonia, especially in linguistic terms. For instance, in the original draft of the *Estatut d'Autonomia* approved by the Catalan parliament in 2005, Catalonia was defined as a 'nation' with 'historical rights' [43]. This idea has consistently been repeated in some of the largest demonstrations for the right to decide (which usually includes the right of secession).

Hence, it can be summarized that there are several reasons why Catalonia wants to be independent and to secede from Spain. Certainly, one of the reasons is the strong economy that Catalonia has. Defense of Catalan secession is usually based on a denunciation of an unfair distribution of revenue by the Spanish government among the autonomous communities. Also, in favor of the Catalan secession or at least for a referendum on independence is based on the implicit affirmation that simply stated, a majority of Catalans want it and that it would be undemocratic to ignore them [44].

The latest news about the Catalan issues address to the following: the Spanish government continues to argue that a regional referendum would be unconstitutional. Spain's parliament rejected Catalonia's request for a poll in April 2014, following a March 2014 Constitutional court ruling that a referendum could only take place if Spain's constitution was amended. An informal vote on independence for Catalonia was held in November 2014 and has shown more than 80% in favor. The non-binding vote went ahead after Spain's constitutional court ruled out holding a formal referendum in the autonomous north-eastern region.

However, Catalonia will push ahead with an 18-month plan to break away from Spain, despite fierce opposition from Madrid, the region's foreign policy chief has said. Pro-independence parties won an absolute majority of seats in the Catalan parliament, giving them the necessary clout to push for independence. Spain itself has been in political deadlock since inconclusive elections when no party gained a majority, but still the Spanish acting prime minister, has refused to contemplate a Catalan referendum [45].

According to some experts and scholars if Spain ignores a strong mandate for secession in a well-conducted referendum and at the same time does not make a credible offer of greater autonomy, there is a great chance that in future, the Catalan Government may seek some help outside from Spain – most probably from the European Union or from the United Nations who can show themselves as mediators in order to get closer the view of the Catalan and Spanish Government.

## 6. Conclusion

The break-up of states has international implications and, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has become a concern for the European Union. The end of the Cold War brought about new secessionist aspirations and the strengthening and re-awakening of existing or dormant separatist claims everywhere. The creation of a new independent entity through the separation of part of the territory and population of an existing State raises serious difficulties as to the role of international law.

Secession does not only involve a political separation, but also a partition of territory. According to this, secession is a complex process involving very sensitive issues as the principle of self-determination, guaranteeing of the basic human rights, and redistribution of resources, devolution of power, cultural and language diversity and many other components.

Secession is often viewed more as a problem of politics than one of law. The basic postulate has been that international law neither allows nor prohibits secession. International law has traditionally acknowledged secession subsequent to a factual state of events, which has led to a situation in which the constitutive elements of a State are present rather than stating the conditions of its legality.

Some law experts and scholars argue that the abuse or neglect of minority self-determination by denying their territorially based self-governance is a supreme violation of human rights which must be protected by international community. According to them secession is not only legal, but also imperative.

Hence, the independence debates in Scotland and Catalonia are the highest profile cases of secession movements within the EU at present. Those who opposes to the possible independence of Scotland and Catalonia find their reasons in the overwhelming risk of destabilisation in Europe and consequently disintegration of the European Union. There are 15 substate nationalist movements in Europe today and if the Scots and the Catalans decided on independence, this could quickly trigger a domino effect in other regions with similar claims, which would increase separatist tensions within the European Union.

Hence, we can get to a closure that the possible secession of Catalonia from Spain is not going to happen soon, because of the position of Spanish Government which strongly opposes to possible secession of Catalonia. However, the situation with Scotland is completely different, having in mind the fact that the Scots in 2014 on a referendum declared against secession from the UK, but after the Brexit referendum and British withdrawing from the EU membership it is quite possible that the Scottish Government may organize a second referendum for secession of Scotland in near future.

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