



**Forum:** COMUN 2020

**Issue:** Determining the relationship between statehood and cultural identity in majority-minority areas.

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## Introduction

All around the world, the problems arisen by having a mix of different cultural identities within countries and regions are ever prevalent in today's world. Whether this is seen in China or Spain where the majority culture attempts to convert or overrule another. This is of course against human rights and illegal yet as a country can abuse its power and shape its own democratic system, it can ignore the opinions and votes of the minority uprising as seen in the Catalan/Spain disagreement. The right for a group to be individual or separate from an abusive country is its own right, although when this separation has economic implications it quickly becomes very complicated and leads to the illegal actions from the main "abusive/powerful" country.

This problem is of great importance as it affects a variety of member states and individuals therefore concerning all members-states whether it concerns the economic situation or their countries thoughts and ideologies on human rights or cultural identity. The UN is obviously completely against the abuse of human rights, especially to such a magnitude. Therefore making this topic quite urgent as tensions in places like Spain and China increase.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Cultural Identity

Is created and constructed from a variety of different traditions, heritage, language, aesthetics, etc. It is what defines someone's traditions and past and is therefore quite personal and important to an individual.

### Culture

The traditions, arts, and heritage, and more of a group of particular people or society.



## Uyghurs/Uighurs

Officially recognized as one of China's 55 ethnic minorities within the Chinese region, they are also recognized as native to the Chinese republic originating in China from approximately the 3rd century CE.

## Catalans

Catalans originate from Catalonia, specifically Tarragona, Barcelona, Lleida and Girona. The Catalans are a total population of approximately 7.5 million people who are responsible for a large amount of Spain's taxes and economic income.

# General Overview

## China and the Uyghurs/Uighurs

There has been increased tension between many nations, such as for example China relating to how they treat cultural minorities such as the Uyghurs in detention camps, prisons, and in what ways they respect their human rights. Many reports have been created signalling that China is breaking the law and not respecting human rights of the Uyghur Muslims by detaining and imprisoning Uyghurs without a real trial, or by not respecting their human rights in any way such. Countries such as the UK and US have increased political tensions as Chinese ambassadors refuse to admit to these claims and label them as fake news. Data revealed and published by the ICIJ shows that these claim upon China may be true, and the UN has become ever aware of the grave situation at hand for all minority groups within the Chinese region. Some of this data reveals that in optional education centres, volunteers were not allowed to escape, were forced to change their beliefs and were heavily punished for "bad behaviour". Leaked Chinese documents confirm the same, that employees of these education centres were to increase punishments, never allow escapes, transform people's beliefs, and promote confession and Chinese beliefs. As more than a million Muslims predominantly being Uyghurs have been placed in these education camps to be "re-educated" the thought that they are being brutally mistreated must concern all member states who believe in universal human rights.

## Spain and the Catalans

Catalonia has its own language, traditions, regions, cities, and culture, with a population of 7.5 million people accounting for a total of 16% of Spain's national population and 19% of Spain's GDP. Catalonia has a lot of tourism and has even hosted its own Olympics games back in 1992.

The Spain Catalan conflict first started in October 2017 when an independence referendum was met by a heavy police crackdown Madrid later imposing direct rule onto the region.



Catalonia is one of Spain's most economically prosperous regions to exist and is therefore of great importance to the Spanish economy. In past Catalonia has had autonomy and independence to a certain extent, even being referred to as a nation on many accounts. Catalonia has had many pro-independence movements and politicians yet there has never been a referendum agreed upon by Spain as almost any attempt to separate the two regions is outlawed or declared illegal by Spain's constitutional court. According to a variety of commendable sources, the original outcome of more than 90% voting for separation quickly diminished 43% due to police forces, and boycotts from unions. On top of this politicians and separatist advocates have been imprisoned and unlawfully trialled which stands against both the universal and the European convention of human rights. In total, this has both put Catalonia's citizens in danger and put Spain's democracy at risk as it may in the future be labelled a flawed democracy according to multiple sources.

## Major Parties Involved

### Spain

Due to the massive conflict in Spain to the point where the region of Tarragona, Barcelona, Lleida and Girona are currently under control from Spain but desperately want to be an independent region due to the economic factors in place. This is a current and clear example of how a minority culture or region can be forced into being part of a larger culture.

### China

Again, due to the conflict at hand inside of China concerning the Uyghurs and their rights for their own identity and land. Another situation where a group or individuals of a specific culture are forced into being a part of a larger more powerful economy/culture/region.

### Catalonia

As Catalonia has been somewhat mistreated in the past few years, they would be a vital and responsible asset to debate throughout this topic. Catalonia has long wanted independence from Spain and will aim to achieve such a thing throughout a debate as such.

### Uyghurs/Uighurs

The Uyghurs have also been mistreated by China despite China mostly denying it, according to a variety of sources up to a million Muslim Uyghurs have been placed in education centres to change or transform their beliefs, and to teach them the Chinese ways.



## Previous attempts to solve the issue

Both Spain and Catalonia want to end the conflict between the two regions for their own reasons whether economic, social, or political. Despite this common goal, both regions wish for the opposite outcomes with Spain wanting the region of Catalonia to remain part of the Spanish region/economy. While Catalonia wishes to separate from Spain, to both run themselves as a region and to have an independent economy. Spain has publicly announced it wants for the concerning conflict to end and has acted upon such wants. Spain wants to start a conversation with Catalonia to agree upon terms about an agreement between both regions to decrease tensions and ensure there is no more damage to either countries reputations, economies, or civilians. This has also motivated Spain to attempt to make themselves look better as a region by investing in roadways, and increasing the minimum wage displaying their interests and needs for their citizens.

## Possible solutions

Any possible solutions which would fix either problems would need to be adopted to a bigger level to ensure that these problems do not arise in any other member states, under any conditions. By agreeing upon a resolution which ensures that issues of this nature, such as the situation in China and Spain and a whole other variety of situations all around the world in a variety of member states, will not arise again.

The GA cannot force anything upon countries and can only suggest countries to do things, but the GA can suggest the SC to enforce countries to abide by regulations set by the UN which may be what is needed to ensure nothing like what is currently happening in Spain or China happens in the future to any level. The Resolution could create a watchdog, or watch group, which would ensure that all requirements of advisements are fully met. Regulating this could also be an option, although this would need to be carefully detailed to ensure that no member states sovereignty is breached, and that all human rights are respected according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



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