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Crisis and Catalonia: An Analysis on the Impact of Crisis on the Public Opinion of the
Secessionist Movement in Catalonia

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By: Rachel Ducker

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Approved:

Advisor: Dr. Milorad Novicevic

Reader: Dr. David Fragozo Gonzalez

Reader: Dr. Ana Velitchkova

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Abstract

Catalonia, the autonomous region of Spain has seen an increase in secessionist sentiments in recent years. While the past inclination toward independence has been centered on economic autonomy and cultural identity, there has been a recent emphasis on political independence, particularly in the times of crisis. In this thesis, I analyze the relationship between the economic changes during the period of a crisis and the public opinion about the potential Catalan secession. Specifically, it investigates the relationships between the economic change and public sentiment during the financial crisis of 2008, the political crisis of 2017, and the pandemic crisis of 2020. I hypothesized that there would be a significant relationship between the economic growth and the Catalan desire to secede during times of crisis. To test my hypothesis, I conducted a trend analysis of the percentage of agreement with questions or statements posed by the Baròmetre d'Opinió Política [Political Opinion Barometer]. The trend of this percentage of agreement was examined against the GDP in Catalonia. This thesis was conducted under the theoretical framework of political economy, paying specific attention to the political economy of secession. The results indicate a weak relationship between the public's desire for secessionism and economic prosperity. The results do suggest, however, that there may be a deterioration between the region of Catalonia and the central government in Spain.

Introduction

Over the last quarter of the 20th century, Catalonia's struggle for autonomy has been centered mainly on the preservation of the cultural identity of the region. However, the movement towards the struggle for independence has gained momentum in the 21st century. Specifically, "from 1975 until around 2006, support for independence rarely rose above 10 percent. For 40 years, it did not move, by 2012, support for independence was touching 50 percent."¹

Over the past decade, the nature of the aspired Catalan independence changed from the traditional emphasis on economic autonomy to the emerging emphasis on political independence. Economic autonomy refers to the ability of Catalonia to make independent decisions about its economic future, while still remaining beholden to Spain as a larger entity. Whereas, its political independence refers in legal terms to its, "external sovereignty that is, the right to exercise freely the full range of power a state possesses under international law."²

The past aspiration of the Catalan movement, which was initially focused on securing regionalism in Catalonia through linguistic and cultural preservation, has over time progressed to achieving economic autonomy and eventually evolved to pursuing political secession. In support of these goals, the arguments expressed in mainstream media, such as those expressed in newspaper articles and social media, that spill over to the political sphere, have centered on

¹ Dowling, Andrew. *The Rise of Catalan Independence : Spain's Territorial Crisis*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/olemiss/detail.action?docID=5167346>.

² "Political independence." *West's Encyclopedia of American Law*, edition 2. 2008. The Gale Group 4 Dec. 2020 <https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Political+independence>

securing fiscal autonomy and control over the region's tax revenue. While past studies have researched the aspirations expressed in these arguments, they have not examined the contextual influence of the crises that occurred over the last two decades on these arguments.

The research question that I seek to address in this thesis is: Is there a relation between these crisis and the concomitant changes in the public opinion of secession in Catalonia? In this thesis I focus on the financial crisis of 2008, the political crisis of 2017, and the pandemic crisis of 2020 as the time periods during which I examine the public opinion of Catalans about secession. To frame this question, I use the political economy framework. Which posits that, “secessionist movements are motivated by grievances with state fiscal structures”³.

My analysis of the relationship between times of crisis and the desires to secede includes the examination of the perceived economic and political situation in Spain and Catalonia. I specifically analyze how the political shifts in public attitudes of the Catalans are related to the with economic variables during the time periods of the following crises: the economic crisis of 2008, the political crisis in 2017, and the pandemic crisis of 2020. Particular attention is paid to the opinions of the citizens, rather than to those declared by the political leaders within the region.

In my examination, I employ a trend analysis using the data obtained from the Baròmetre d’Opinió Política [Political Opinion Barometer] (BOP). The analysis focuses on public attitudes related to regionalist views, perception of economic burden, and political tendencies associated with the economic crisis of 2008, the political referendum crisis of 2017, and the covid-19 crisis

³ Boylan, Brandon. (2015). In pursuit of independence: The political economy of Catalonia's secessionist movement. *Nations and Nationalism*. 21. 761-785. 10.1111/nana.12121.

of 2020. The trends in from these responses are compared to the GDP in Catalonia to examine whether there is a relationship between economic changes during crisis and public opinion.

Assessing the relationship between the of crises and public sentiment in Catalonia about secessionist movements is important to understand the prevalence of certain groups' desire for independence. This understanding is important because the desire to be a sovereign nation is not unique to Catalonia, as some regions such as Scotland, Quebec, and Flanders have expressed their desire to become independent nations. Understanding the relation between crisis and public sentiment is relevant because the movements and strides towards independence that have not been successful have usually resulted in political unrest, or even widespread turmoil.

This thesis is organized as follows. First, I provide the historical background of Catalonia, paying special attention to the progression of the movement over the years. Focusing particularly on the progression of Catalonia's integration into modern day Spain from the 10th century onward. I describe the economic relations between the Catalan region and Spain, with the intent to frame the current salient economic grievances addressed by the supporters of the regionalist movement. This historical background highlights Catalan history from historians and researchers in the region and is not indicative of the opinions and views of all historians and researchers in Spain. This examination into the historical background of the region and its relationship with Spain would help to uncover if there is an existing relationship between times of crisis and a change in public opinion. If there is an existing pattern throughout history, this would aid in proving my hypothesis that there is a correlation between times of crisis and increased desire for independence in the region.

Second, upon describing the historical background to contextualize the salient issues in Catalonia, I present the relevant literature on the political economy of secession as it relates to the situation in Catalonia.

Third, I present the results of my trend analysis conducted based on the data from the Baròmetre d'Opinió Política [Political Opinion Barometer] (BOP) that are compared with GDP from the region of Catalonia. In particular, I calculate a correlation coefficient to determine whether there is a significant correlation between the key economic indicators during the crisis and public opinion and thus test my hypothesis. I discuss my trend analysis in the context of the described historical background.

Fourth, I discuss my findings focusing on the relevance of the finance, political, and pandemic crises for the Catalan regionalist movement. In conclusion, I outline the implications of my research.

Historical Background

One of the main constructed arguments against the formation of an independent Catalonia is the narrative that Catalonia has never existed as a nation separate from Spain. This narrative, which has been propagated by the central government, is not supported by the historical facts. Many researchers and historians still cling to the idea that Catalonia has always been a part of Spain, but there is condemning evidence to suggest that Catalonia was an independent nation. To understand the current situation within Catalonia, the history of sovereignty, as well as the political and economic independence of the region, must be examined. This examination delving into the history of Catalonia is important for the topic of this thesis because it sheds light on the

role of crisis and its connection to public opinion, as well as the existing tension between Catalonia and the central government in Spain.

The counties of Catalonia, which had originally been a buffer zone between modern day France and Muslim dominated Hispania, were taken by Frankish forces in 801, when they were made to pay vassalage. During the early 800s there was no singular local overlord, but this tradition changed with Guifré el Pilós, who became the Count of Barcelona in 878, making this title hereditary, thereby, founding the House of Barcelona. In 985, when the city of Barcelona was attacked by Al-Mansur, Borrell II Count of Barcelona called for Frankish aid, but it never came. Therefore in 987, Borell II declared that the territory would no longer be paying vassalage to the Frankish Empire, thus establishing the independence of the County of Barcelona.

“Most Catalan historians regard 987, as the date when Catalonia became a sovereign state and the millennium was celebrated in 1987. The problem for Spanish nationalists, though, is that the territory ruled by the Counts of Barcelona was neither called Catalonia nor had a king, this is why they claim that Catalonia never existed.”⁴

In 1137, the Kingdom of Aragon and the County of Barcelona were joined under the union of Ramon Berenguer IV Count of Barcelona and Petronila of Aragon. This union created the Crown of Aragon, which is also known as the Catalano-Aragonese Confederation. The Crown of Aragon was a composite monarchy, “also nowadays referred to as a confederation of individual states or kingdoms,”⁵. The Crown of Aragon should not be confused with the

⁴ Harris, Simon. *Catalonia Is Not Spain: a Historical Perspective*. 4Cats Books, 2014.

⁵ Harris, 38.

Kingdom of Aragon. The former was a confederation joined only at the level of the king, while the latter was its own sovereign nation. During this period, the confederation of the Catalan Counties became the Principality of Catalonia.

Under this confederation, the Principality of Catalonia began to move away from the typical feudal society, as demonstrated in *The Usatges de Barcelona*, which first attempted to bridge the gap between the ruler and the subjects, and even later in 1283 with the establishment of the *Corts Catalanes*. The *Corts Catalanes*, which was the first legislative body in the region, is, “often considered the earliest rudimentary parliament in Europe,”⁶ by many historians. The *Corts Catalanes* later evolved into a permanent institution, the *Disputació del General*, which would later be known as the *Generalitat*. Under the Crown of Aragon, the Principality of Catalonia was governed by the *Generalitat* unencumbered until the death of Martí the Humane in 1410. The House of Barcelona died with Martí the Humane, and after his death, the Crown of Aragon shifted into Castilian possession.

During this time there was a shift to more Castilian practices, which entailed the linguistic and political shift from Catalan to Castilian. Following this shift, Europe was decimated by the Black Plague, which further engendered a crisis and exacerbated the tension within the region. This tension came to fruition in the form of a civil war in 1462. During the war, questionable circumstances surrounded the death of Carles, Prince of Viana, who was the Catalan’s favorite to succeed Juan the Faithless, the former ruler. This period of unrest lasted until 1471 leaving the region in economic turmoil and the lower class near starvation. The marriage of Fernando to Isabel of Castile reaffirmed the influence of Castile in the Crown of Aragon, further ostracizing Catalan influence on the confederation.

⁶ Harris, 54.

Many believe that the union of Fernando of Aragon and Isabel of Castile created the formation of modern Spain, but this is a false belief because the territories still maintained separate legal and political systems.

“The union itself was purely dynastic: a union not of two people but of two royal houses. Other than the fact that henceforth Castile and Aragon would share the same monarch, there would, in theory, be no change either in their status or in the form of government. It was true that, in the person of Fernando, their foreign policies were likely to be fused, but in other respects they would continue to lead the lives they had led before the union.”⁷

During his reign as king, Fernando signed the Constitució de l’Observança in 1480, which gave the political systems in Catalonia primacy over the king in defining the constitution over the country. This never became the reality because Fernando instituted an authoritarian style of rule over the Catalan people. The Catalan region was disproportionately affected by the Spanish Inquisition during the reign of the Catholic monarchs. As the Catalan region had a rich mixture of different faiths and ethnic groups, at the onset of the Inquisition many Jewish merchants and bankers fled, leaving the region to tumble into an economic downturn.

Fernando of Aragon was succeeded by his daughter Juana the Mad for a short period of time, as regency was quickly passed to her son Carlos in 1520. Due to the connection of the Crowns of Aragon and Castile, many historians consider Carlos the first ruler of a united Spain, but his titles demonstrate that he was the king of multiple Spains. In his long list of titles, he is mentioned as the King of Catalonia, which further solidifies the separation of the region from

⁷ Harris, 84.

Spain as whole. During this time Catalonia still maintained its own language, institutions, and charters.

With the onset of Felipe II's reign in 1556, Catalonia was exposed to an autocratic rule which exemplified a centrist political form. As King Felipe II was religiously intolerant, his attitude significantly impacted the trade within Catalonia. The region was forced to pay customs on goods from Castille, it was not allowed to trade with the Americas, and it lost power in both the political and economic spheres of Europe. After the death of Fernando of Aragon, Catalonia experienced a continuous weathering of its laws and charters. The region also felt unrepresented in a government that was predominantly ruled by Castilians. Much like today, the central government believed the Catalans were disproportionately privileged and should be made to contribute equally to Castile both financially and in military representation. During the Thirty Years War, Felipe IV and his advisor Count-Duke Olivares tried to institute the Union of Arms, which demanded conscription from all territories, but this demand was rejected by all non-Castilian territories. In 1635, Castilian troops were sent to Catalonia to secure the border territory shared with France, but they acted as an invading force. The Castilians took over multiple towns, taking away the Catalans possessions and women, and instilling a sense of terror in the population. In 1640, the Catalans turned on the Castilians resisting the oppressive regime and rules. This event was known as the Corpus of Blood as it, "marked the start of the first full scale Catalan uprising after a century of Castilian imposition,"⁸. The Catalan peasants and reapers counted the Castilian troops and representatives responsible for the lack of work and onset of distress in the region. This conflict was known as the Reapers War. The Generalitat, which saw this insurrection as an opportunity to gain independence, aligned with the French to expel the

⁸ Harris, 123.

Castilian forces and their influence from the region. Count-Duke Olivares sent thousands of Castilian troops to quell the rebellion, conquering multiple towns and killing hundreds of Catalans. Catalonia signed the Treaty of Ceret, after the Catalans and the French secured Barcelona, which deemed Catalonia an independent republic with protection from France. Although Catalonia escaped the Castilian oppression, it faced the same treatment at the hands of the French. The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which put an end to the Thirty Years War, posed a problem for the region because it gave Castile the opportunity to focus solely on Catalonia, which was taken by Castilian troops in 1652. Castile and France negotiated peace without consulting the Corts Catalanes. Thus, awarding some Catalan territories to France. As the French banned the use of Catalan laws and language, the territories conspired to return to Catalonia. However, they were finally forced to accept their reality in 1720 when the remaining Catalan territories were fully subjugated to Castile after the War of Spanish Succession.

The War of Spanish Succession, which lasted from 1701-1714, was a result of the death of Charles II of Castile, who died without an heir. During the war Archduke Charles, who was later crowned King Charles, took the city of Barcelona. With the promise to return Catalonia a semblance of the old Catalonia before two centuries of Castilian oppression, he received the support of the population. Felipe V, grandson of Louis XIV, tried to capture the city of Barcelona in 1706, but he was unsuccessful. In 1710, after a string of victories, the advantage was held by Felipe V. In 1713 Catalonia was commanded to surrender, but this outcome was met with stark opposition and Catalonia declared war. This declaration of war marked the beginning of the 15-month Siege of Barcelona. The city eventually fell on September 11th, 1714. The fall of Barcelona in 1714 marked the end of independence of the region.

After the fall of Barcelona, a military occupation was instituted, along with the introduction of the Nueva Planta de la Real Audiencia del Principado de Cataluña in 1716. As all of Catalonia's charters and privileges were revoked, the power over the region rested solely in the hands of the king. These decrees, "were a culmination of 90 years of Castilian attempts to impose absolute rule on Catalonia and the rest of the Crown of Aragon, a process that had begun under the Count-Duke Olivares and his Union of Arms,"⁹. In addition to the Nueva Planta, the crown instituted the cadastre, which was a contributory system that disproportionately taxed Catalonia. In the years after the implementation of the Nueva Planta, the Catalan language was phased out of the administrative sphere of the region, and a Castilian administration loyal to the crown was implanted. Catalan language was relegated to the social sphere of the region and was removed from the education system.

Facing the destruction during the war, coupled with the oppressive taxation system and government, Catalonia experienced a lot of hardship. The region began to recover with the opening of trade routes with the Americas and the booming textile industry in the mid to late 18th century. The sense of division between Catalonia and the rest of Spain was relatively low at the beginning of the 19th century due to the consolidated efforts exhibited during the Peninsular War against a common enemy, France. Later in the 19th century a cultural resurgence occurred in Catalonia, prompting the use of Catalan language in high culture. In the later part of the 19th century, Catalan was being used in public domain – for example, in newspapers and literature. Catalonia was again emerging not only as an economic power, but also a cultural hub. This economic resurrection and resurgence of Catalan culture led to the, "creation of the modern

⁹ Harris, 155.

Catalan identity based on the Principality's medieval Golden Age,"¹⁰. In 1891, the Unió Catalanista formed with the intention of promoting both regionalist and federalist ideas. The Unió Catalanista created the Bases de Manresa in 1892, which called for political autonomy in the region. This call for a separation from the central government was again met with repressive action, which was not lifted until 1901. At this point, Catalanism became popular throughout the population. In the free elections of 1907, the Solidaritat Catalana, which was formed and won, began lobbying the central government for the formation of the Mancomunitat that would combine four provinces in Catalonia. As lobbying was opposed in the central government, protests broke out in 1913. The representatives of Catalonia advised passing the bill to avoid violence, and it was passed in 1914. The Mancomunitat was mainly symbolic in nature, as it did not cede any powers that the region had not already possessed, but many believed that it was a step towards possible autonomy in the future. Despite this symbolic movement towards autonomy, Catalonia experienced turmoil during much of the 20th century.

Miguel Primo de Rivera was the first dictator of Spain during the 20th century. During his ruling Catalan institutions were again outlawed, and a Spanish educational system was implemented prohibiting the teaching of any material that deviated from the syllabus. As Primo de Rivera surrounded himself with anti-Catalanist leaders, the Mancomunitat was suppressed less than a decade after its genesis. After the fall of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship in 1931, Catalonia entered into negotiations with Spain to avoid conflict. The representative of Catalonia, Francesc Macià, agreed to limit the independence of the region in exchange for the restoration of the Generalitat. The Estatut de Núria was drafted, establishing Catalonia as an autonomous community of Spain, and, for the first time since 1714, when the Generalitat governed Catalonia.

¹⁰ Harris, 180.

Following an unfortunate election in 1933, the Generalitat and Catalonia's autonomy were called into question, the region again declared independence. Because opposition was not tolerated by the Spanish government, the insurrection was put down. The leaders were arrested, Castilian was forced upon the region, and Catalonia's autonomy was suspended indefinitely. These measures were eventually lifted in 1936, but new trouble was soon to follow.

The Spanish Civil War began in 1936 and eventually ended in 1939 with the rise of Franco. The Franco regime, "imposed the most radical politics of assimilation against Catalan,"¹¹. This period in Spain was marked by a totalitarian rule calling for Spanish unity, submitting Catalonia to a harsher version of occupation. Catalan culture and language were suppressed, thousands of books were destroyed, and Catalonia became an example to the rest of Spain of the consequences of not adhering to the idea of the singularity of Spain. After the Nazi defeat in 1945, the Franco regime became more covert when it came to repression, and some Catalan literature and language began to emerge again. Catalans found support in the church, which became a safe haven for their expression. After years of oppression and over taxation, Catalonia took a stand during 1951 by boycotting public transportation because the rates in Barcelona were much higher than anywhere else in Spain. This boycott ended when the Guardia Civil opening fire. However, the event marked an important turning point in the ways in which Catalonia opposed the regime, because the rejection to utilize public transportation could not have been punished as a crime, and therefore it unified the people of Catalonia. Repression still remained in force in the region, while political and linguistic freedoms were restricted.

In the 1960s and 1970s, popular culture spreading around the world began to influence the region, renewing the Catalan people's understanding of the inequality that they faced and the

¹¹ Harris, 213.

freedoms that were forcibly taken. Police brutality and censorship were still rampant in society along with the repression of political systems. In the 1960s, Catalonia again received support from the Catholic Church with, “the Pope himself [condemning] cultural and political repression against national minorities,”¹². In 1971, the Assemblea de Catalunya, which was formed, “argued in favor of democratic freedom and rights, citizen’s access to economic and political power and Catalonia’s right to self-determination,”¹³. The Assemblea was behind most of popular opposition to the regime, but it was dissolved after the fall of Franco. The later part of the 1970s was still marked by brutal repression, but Catalonia began to prepare for a transition to modern Spain.

The region began to organize politically with the formation of the Consell de Forces Polítiques de Catalunya, which fought for the reinstatement of political institutions. This time period was also characterized by the resurgence of Catalan representation in the media, specifically in newspapers and radio stations.

“The media landscape left by Franco’s regime was predominantly Spanish language, in the press, radio and television. After Franco’s death, it was very difficult to re-establish a Catalan media language.”¹⁴

¹² Harris, 229.

¹³ Harris, 231-232.

¹⁴ Prado, Emili. “The Press in Catalonia: between the Digital Challenge and Nation Building.” *Media, Culture & Society* 37, no. 1 (2014): 134–43.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443714553563>.

The people of Catalonia continued to utilize their new-found freedom of expression. In 1977, the people of Catalonia participated in the, “biggest demonstration in post-war Europe...calling for ‘Freedom, Amnesty, and State of Autonomy’”¹⁵. As this demonstration bore a positive response, the laws Franco instituted to repress Catalan institutions were repealed and the Generalitat was restored. In 1978, the new Spanish Constitution was drawn up, which protected the language of the autonomous communities, but it also stated that it was a duty to speak Castilian.

*“The Constitution is based on the indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation, common and indivisible fatherland (patria) of all Spaniards. It acknowledges and guarantees the right to autonomy of the nationalities of which it is composed and solidarity among them.”*¹⁶

With the Constitution came the formation of the 17 autonomous communities of Spain, which were formed under the presumed understanding they all shared common characteristics. However, an uneven tax system, which still remains today, was again levied against the region. The Catalan Statute of Autonomy was passed in 1979, which awarded jurisdiction of, “culture, environment, communications, transportation, commerce, public safety and local governments,”¹⁷ to the Generalitat, while education, justice, and health were shared with the central government. After an attempted coup in 1981 shook the central government, it instituted the LOAPA or Ley Orgánica de Armonización del Proceso Autonómico, which sought to

¹⁵ Harris, 240.

¹⁶ Harris, 242.

¹⁷ Harris, 244.

standardize political power in the regions, mainly Catalonia and the Basque Country. As this move was perceived as an attack on Catalan culture, the response to the LOAPA became political. A demonstration was organized in 1982 with 100,000 participants. LOAPA was withdrawn for fear of serious upheaval, but the separatist movement was again at the forefront of society.

The 1980s saw a desire for the revival of the Catalan language in public forums. Popular media, including television, radio and newspapers, used Catalan, while linguistic immersion was instituted in the education system of the region. With Spain's entry into the European Economic Community, which later evolved into the European Union, the country experienced major economic growth. The region began to flourish, particularly when the city of Barcelona hosted the 1992 Olympic Games. The games were a magnificent success making Barcelona one of the most well-known cities in Spain. While engendering an influx of tourism and economic growth, the games also had political significance. People around the world could see the banners claiming that 'Catalonia is not Spain' flying at international sporting events of the 1992 Olympic Games where they made their debut. With such a worldwide stage, Catalonia made its desires known, and it would not be for the last time.

Later in 1996, José Maria Aznar won the General Elections and the Partido Popular rose to power. The central government began to implement draconian measures, regarding the tax system and spending, in preparation for the adoption of the euro. Aznar's government also opposed autonomic power of the regions and desired to recentralize Spain. The Partido Popular continued their anti-Catalanist campaign, while Catalonia still faced an unfair tax system. In 2002, Catalonia was, "the most heavily taxed region in Europe."¹⁸ This tax burden continued the

¹⁸ Harris, 279.

friction between Catalonia and the central government that is still an issue in modern day.

As Catalonia felt that the 1979 State of Autonomy needed revision, in 2005 the Catalan Parliament passed a redraft of the Estatut. In the redrafting of the Estatut, Catalonia was defined as a nation not a nationality.

“Another clause stipulated that Catalan should be on the same level as Castilian making it an obligatory rather than merely co-official language. The text defined the Generalitat as the ultimate arbiter in terms of civil law, language, culture, education, and system of government and similarly, the Tribunal Superior de Justícia de Catalunya would be the supreme justice body in Catalonia. The fiscal problem was also addressed by creating a Catalan treasury that would have the capacity to collect taxes.”¹⁹

The Partido Popular opposed this revision by bringing an appeal to the Constitutional Court. As viewed by the Catalan region, the Spanish media propagated an anti-Catalanist campaign that resulted in the boycott on Catalan goods and massive demonstrations. The appeal attacked almost every facet of the revised Estatut, so that in 2010 much of the document was deemed unconstitutional, specifically in regard to financial or territorial disputes. After this ruling, the people of Catalonia took their rage to the streets shouting, “Som una nació. Nosaltres decidim” or “We are a nation. We decide.”²⁰ For many this marked the modern-day movement for Catalan independence.

¹⁹ Harris, 266.

²⁰ Harris, 272.

The Catalanist movement progressed forward with fervor, while the abuse from Madrid continued to deluge the region. Catalonia was still paying the highest taxes in Spain, while receiving the lowest amount of investment. During this time, independent studies surfaced claiming that Catalonia would be economically viable if it became independent, thus increasing public sentiment for independence. In 2012, on the national day of Catalonia, La Diada, a demonstration occurred with more than 1.5 million people shouting for independence. This event prompted to the Catalan Parliament to pass a Declaration of Sovereignty and Right to Decide of the Catalan people. It pushed for a referendum, but instead it was held as a non-binding vote. The voting was held in November of 2014 when, “voters were asked two questions - whether they wanted Catalonia to be a state and whether they wanted that state to be independent.”²¹ The result was that 80.1% of voters responded yes to both questions. In response, the central government continued to try and repress the region, but it only increased the region’s desire for independence. An official referendum, which was held in 2017, resulted in over 90% of the voters responding yes to the questions asked.²² As this outcome was deemed unconstitutional, the leaders were removed from office and imprisoned.

In summary, Catalonia was not always a part of Spain, and, therefore, throughout its history it has expressed its desire to return to the Golden Age of the Principality of Catalonia. The region has been continually subjected to totalitarian rule at the hands of the central government, disproportionate taxation, and severe cultural and linguistic oppression. Frequently, when Catalonia faced an oppressive regime or a crisis, it opposed the central government in

²¹ Gilpin

²² Ragone, Sabrina. “The Catalan Referendum on Independence: A Constitutional Conundrum.” ASIL, 20 Dec. 2017, www.asil.org/insights/volume/21/issue/16/catalan-referendum-independence-constitutional-conundrum

favor of forming an independent nation. With the Reapers in 1642, the Siege of Barcelona in 1714, or the referendums in the 21st century, Catalonia has demonstrated its desire for independence, with the public sentiment for such action continuing to grow in the 21st century. In the subsequent section, I overview the literature and theories surrounding the political economy of secession and discuss their relevance to the situation in Catalonia.

Political Economy Framework of the Catalan Secession

This section is focused on examining the political and economic relationship between the autonomous region of Catalonia and the central government. As stated in the previous section on the historical background, Spain still operates under the constitution that was ratified in 1978. This constitution, which emphasizes the unity of Spain, calls for minimal decentralization. The economic relationship between the central government and Catalonia allows for significant regional control over spending, but the revenue policy is controlled by the central government. This relationship creates a reality of ‘vertical fiscal imbalance’ meaning the, “central government’s revenue exceeds its responsibilities, while regional governments’ revenue is often inadequate for meeting their needs”.²³

Spain operates under a system of fiscal equalization, meaning that the revenue of the richest regions in Spain, like Catalonia, offset the revenue of the poorer regions. Many of the people in favor of secession adhere to the belief that their revenue should remain in their region. This has been a site of contention between the central government and Catalonia, with the central

²³ Boylan, Brandon. (2015). In pursuit of independence: The political economy of Catalonia's secessionist movement. *Nations and Nationalism*. 21. 761-785. 10.1111/nana.12121.

government emphasizing the unity of Spain and the region of Catalonia existing in fiscal frustration.

In line with the political economy of secession, Whitman theorizes in his paper, 'Nations and states: mergers and acquisitions; dissolutions and divorce' that, "Two nations would join together (separate) if the economies of scale and scope and the synergy produced by their union created greater (smaller) benefits than cost,".²⁴ This theory coincides with the idea that, "the greater the economic differentials between the minority (or region) and the state, the more likely the minority is to mobilize around demands for autonomy or secession,".²⁵ These theories suggest that when there is fiscal frustration in conjunction with perceived economic benefits of secession, the desire for independence will increase. In regard to Catalonia, many believe that the opportunity cost of secession is preferable to the opportunity costs of remaining within Spain.

*"The debate about the economic and financial viability of an independent Catalonia has to date mainly focused on the trade-off between the fiscal benefits of eliminating negative fiscal flows with the rest of Spain, and the losses from a potential decline of sales to the Spanish market, the main trading partner of the Catalan economy."*²⁶

²⁴ Wittman, Donald. "Nations and States: Mergers and Acquisitions; Dissolutions and Divorce." *The American Economic Review* 81, no. 2 (1991): 126-29. Accessed April 5, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org.umiss.idm.oclc.org/stable/2006839>.

²⁵ Jenne, Erin K., Stephen M. Saideman, and Will Lowe. "Separatism as a Bargaining Posture: The Role of Leverage in Minority Radicalization." *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 5 (2007): 539-58. Accessed April 5, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org.umiss.idm.oclc.org/stable/27640565>.

²⁶ Castells, Antoni. "Catalonia and Spain at the Crossroads: Financial and Economic Aspects." *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 30, no. 2 (2014): 277-96. Accessed April 5, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org.umiss.idm.oclc.org/stable/43664607>.

There have been studies that demonstrated that Catalonia would be a viable entity apart from Spain, but the region must examine the opportunity cost of secession.

The policy of fiscal equalization becomes increasingly important during times of crisis, which are linked to decreased economic growth and prosperity. During times of crisis, given the central government's distribution of revenue does not change, Catalonia will not only be responsible for its affected economic situation but also for the poorer autonomous communities in Spain.

As some researchers theorize that there is an interesting link between ethnic individualism and economic standing within a state, Gourevitch proposed the idea that in states that are multi-ethnic, secessionist movements can be avoided if the political and economic resources exist in tandem. When the opposite is true, like in the case of Catalonia, "a region's nationalism is the strongest when it 1) is differentiated by its ethnicity and 2) has an economically superior position relative to the original centre."²⁷

Based on the theories put forth by scholars in their analysis of the political economy of secession, coupled with the knowledge of the fiscal equalization of Spain, it may be inferred that Catalonia would become increasingly frustrated with their current situation and want to secede. In the subsequent section I conduct a trend analysis to test my hypothesis that is grounded in the theory on the political economy of secession. Specifically, I analyze the public opinions in the region in relation to the region's GDP. A significant correlation between these two would provide the basis for the causal relationship of secession, as laid out in the literature of the

²⁷ Gourevitch, P. 1979. 'The reemergence of "peripheral nationalism": some comparative speculations on the spatial distribution of political leadership and economic growth', *Society for Comparative Studies in Society and History* 21, 3: 303–22.

political economy of secession. As stated above, researchers of political economy theorize that if the perception of benefits outweighs the cost in terms of fiscal prosperity, this will cause a separatist ideal. Bearing in mind the link between economic downturn and crisis, this theorizing supports my hypothesis that during times of crisis, there would be an increase in the desire to secede. In the subsequent section, I overview my trend analysis of the Catalan public opinion data in light of the theories outlined in this section. Particular focus is paid to the time periods of the financial, political, and pandemic crises.

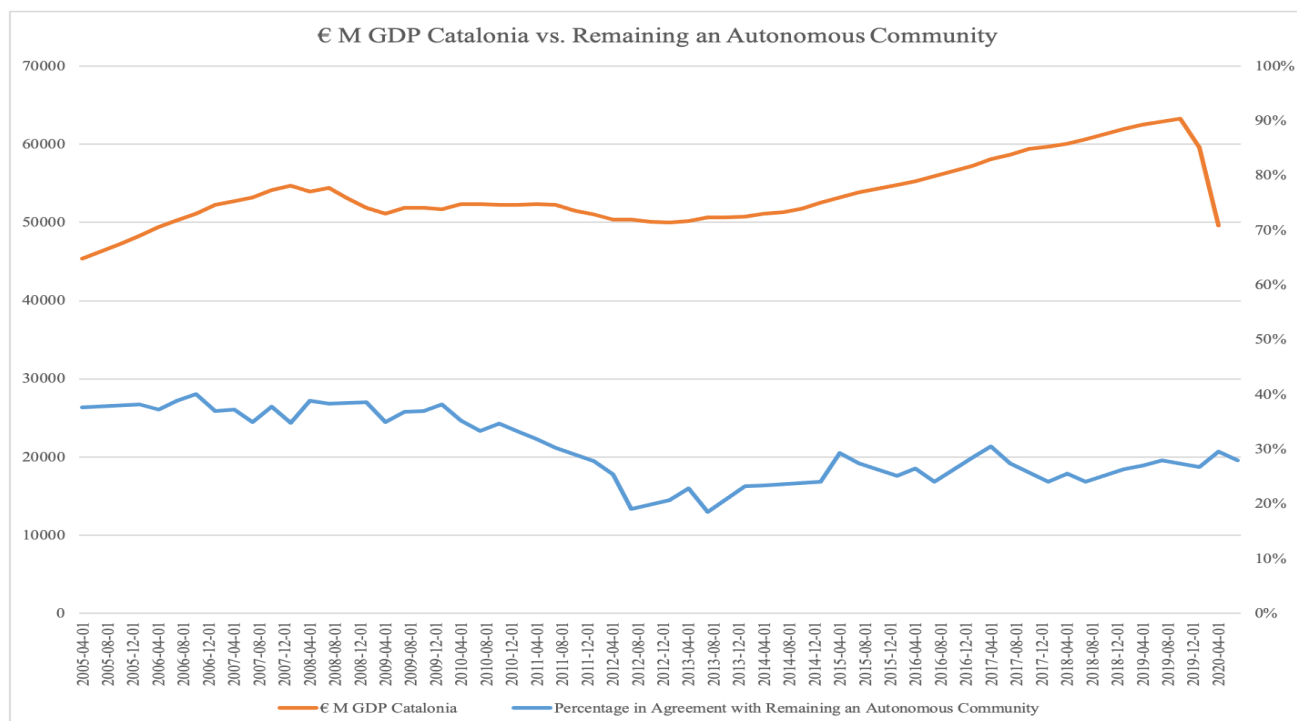
Trends (Highlighting the Trends Uncovered from the Catalan Public Opinion Data)

In this section I conduct a trend analysis which examines the responses from participants' in the Baròmetre d'Opinió Política. This is a multistage survey, conducted quarterly, administered by the Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió (CEO) of the Generalitat de Catalunya. It employs the use of random selection within three units; the primary unit which focuses on the municipalities within each province, the secondary unit which focuses on the census sections, and the last unit which focuses on individuals. This trend analysis depicts the change in opinion over a time period encompassing three major crises in the region: the financial crisis in 2008, the political crisis in 2017, and the pandemic crisis of 2020. The trends from the Baròmetre d'Opinió Política are placed in the same graph as GDP data from the region, and a correlation coefficient is calculated to show if there is a correlation between economic prosperity or downturn, which is an indicator of crisis.

The first question that I analyzed from the CEO. Baròmetre d'Opinió Política was, “Creu que Catalunya hauria de ser...” or “He believes that Catalonia should be ...” This question prompted the participants in the survey to choose if they believed that the region should be: an

autonomous community in Spain, an independent state, a state within federal Spain, or a region of Spain. The participants could also respond with, “No ho sap,” which translates to mean, “do not know,” or, “No contesta,” which translates to mean, “No answer.”

I decided to analyze the percentage of participants that agreed with the statements over the years, looking individually at select prompts stated in the survey. I began with a trend analysis on the participants’ response to the desire to remain an autonomous community of Spain. Since the beginning of the collection of this data in 2005, the public opinion supporting the maintenance of Catalonia as an autonomous community has decreased as seen in Figure 1. The highest percentage in agreement with the maintenance of the autonomous community occurred in the last quarter of 2006, but has since declined, reaching its lowest level in the third quarter of 2013.

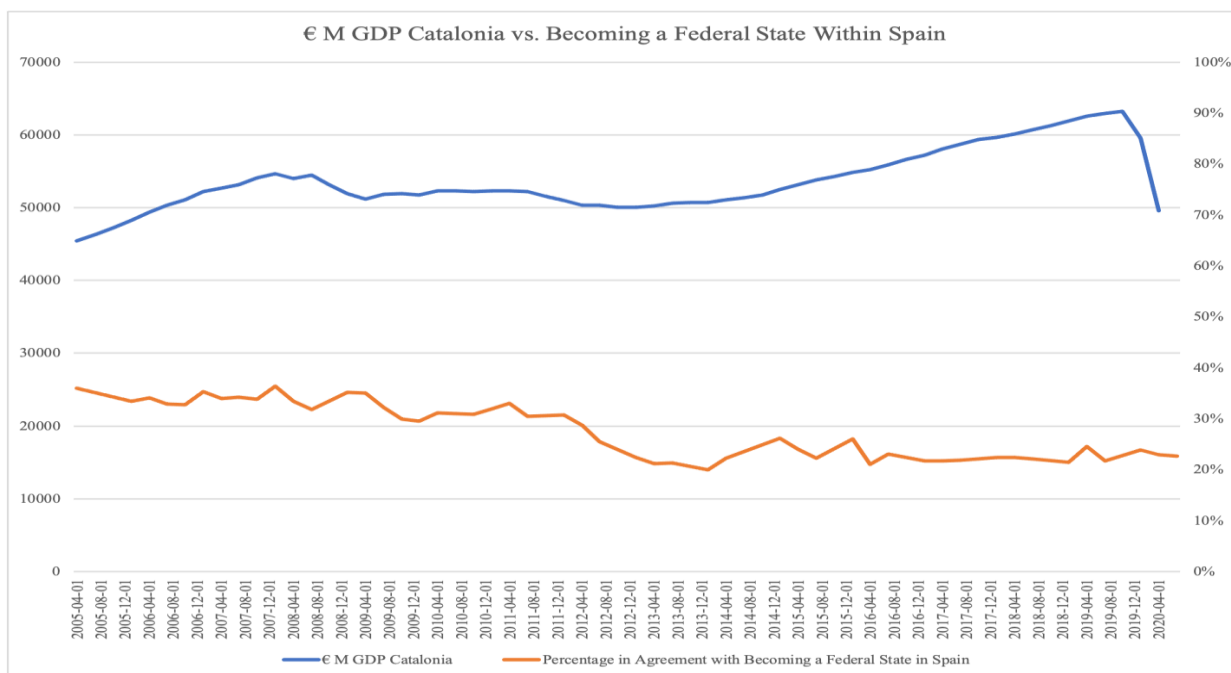


(Figure 1)

In Figure 1, support for remaining an autonomous community in Spain is almost 20 percentage points higher at the beginning of the 21st century than at the lowest point recorded. This support began to decline with the onset of the economic crisis in 2008, and this trend continued until 2014. As demonstrated in Figure 1 there is a decrease at the end of 2008 when the GDP of Catalonia contracted as it entered into recession in 2009. The desire to remain an autonomous community does not rise until after the economic crisis abates in 2014 when the GDP in the region begins to rise again. This level of agreement would suggest that when there are better economic conditions in the region, the desire to remain a part of Spain rises. The decrease demonstrated in the graph during times of crisis indicates that during times of economic distress the desire to remain in Spain decreases. This trend could possibly be linked to the region's distaste of the higher regional taxes in Catalonia during the financial crisis due to the fiscal equalization policy in Spain

The correlation coefficient measuring the GDP of Catalonia and the Percentage in Agreement with Remaining an Autonomous Community is -0.3. This indicates that there is a weak negative linear relationship between the two variables. Historically, when Catalonia has expressed their desire to secede, it was met with repression from the central government, resulting in hardship. The hardship in the present day is much different than in times past, however. The hardship that the region faces today materializes in slander from media, and regional political turmoil. Figure 1 also depicts a negative trend following the political crisis in 2017. After a referendum was held, the central government deemed it unconstitutional. The central government removed several officials from office and placed them in prisons or levied them with heavy fines, thus plunging the region into political upheaval. As demonstrated throughout history, political upheaval and uncertainty contributes to increased support for the regionalist movement. At the

onset of the COVID-19 pandemic there is another a decrease in support for remaining an autonomous community along with a decrease in GDP. A contributing factor to this negative trend



could be the Estatut of Autonomy, and its stipulation that the public health system in the country and its revenue, is solely controlled by the central government. As demonstrated in Figure 1 the support for remaining an autonomous community rises during times of economic prosperity, and decreases during times of economic distress, like during times of crisis.

(Figure 2)

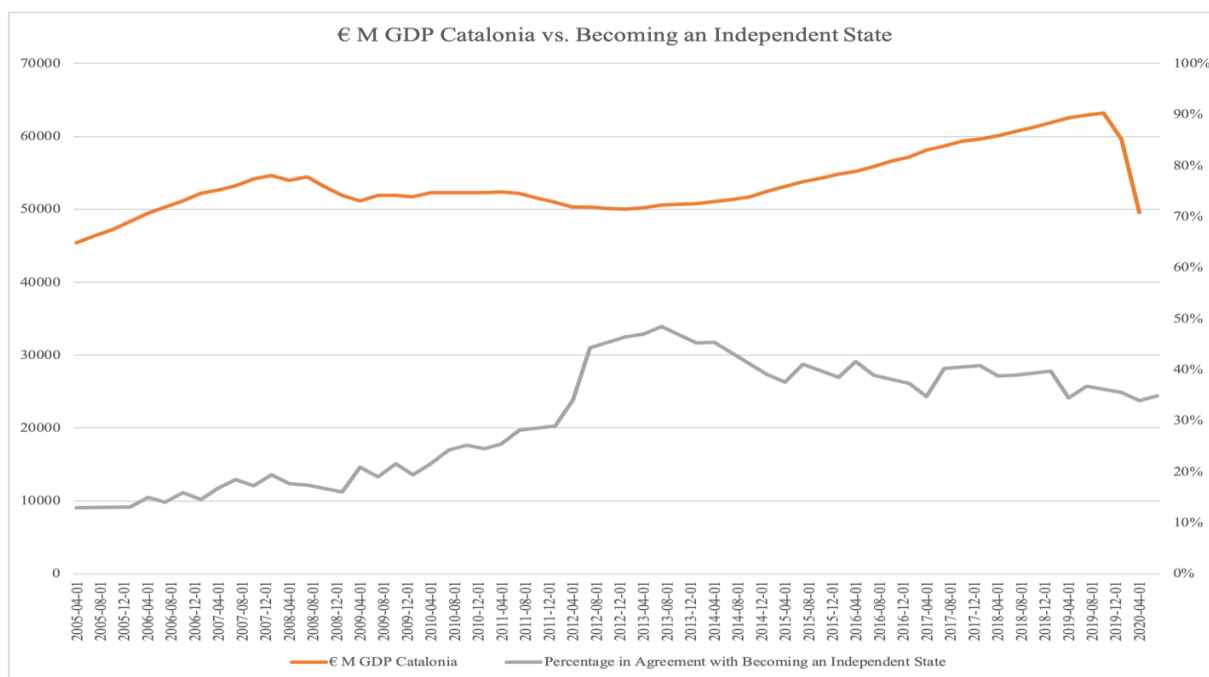
I also analyzed the data related to the extent of support for Catalonia becoming a federal state of Spain. This data graph is shown in Figure 2. The graph displays a negative trend from 2005 to 2020, showing that the highest percentage of agreement occurred in the first quarter of 2008 at 36.4%, while the lowest percentage occurred in the first quarter of 2014 at 20%. Overall, the subjects' agreement with Catalonia becoming a federal state of Spain has decreased. Just like the trend exhibited in Figure 1, there is a negative trend following the economic crisis. The correlation coefficient between GDP in Catalonia and Agreement with Becoming a State in Federal Spain is -0.5 which indicates a moderate negative linear relationship. There is also another dip in the trend

line at the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. The lowest percentage occurred during the non-binding vote during 2014, and this low percentage trend follows throughout the political crisis in 2017. The levels never reach the percentage of agreement that was present at the beginning of the 20th century. The results of this trend analysis follow the previous example where economic distress creates a decrease in support for becoming a federal state in Spain.

The last response whose trend I analyzed was the agreement with establishing Catalonia as an independent state. Unlike the two previous responses that exhibited negative trends and negative correlation coefficients, this particular prompt has had a positive trend since 2005, as shown in Figure 3. The lowest percentage of agreement occurred in the second quarter of 2005, with the highest percentage of agreement occurred in the third quarter of 2013 with 48.5% of the participants in agreement. The public sentiment for the formation of an independent was low at the beginning of the 21st century but began rising after the economic crisis. The correlation coefficient between GDP in Catalonia and Agreement with Becoming an independent state is 0.4 which indicates there is a moderate positive relationship. As stated earlier, Catalonia carries a heavier economic burden due to regional taxes. “Catalonia was one of the Autonomous Communities hardest hit by the crisis, particularly on unemployment,” and the combined fiscal and financial effects exacerbated the secessionist sentiment.²⁸ This disproportionate tax system during the economic crisis, and the increase in the desire to secede could be explained by the theories put forth in the sections above stating that a region will look to separate from the state if the benefits of independence are higher. In Figure 3, the public sentiment for an independent state

²⁸ Ordeix, Enric, and Xavier Ginesta. “Political Engagement Principles as the Basis for New Regional Self-Determination Processes in Europe.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 58, no. 7 (2013): 928–40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213506214>.

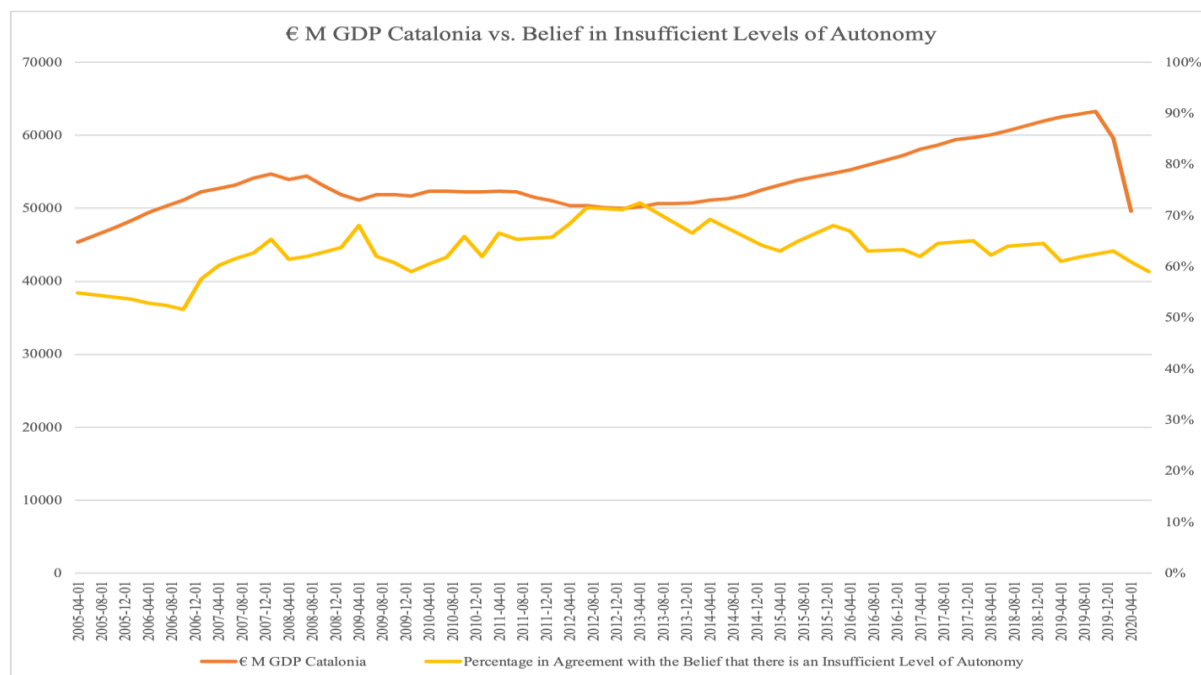
also reaches its highest level before the non-binding vote and during the some of the lowest recorded data point for GDP. The graph also depicts a positive trend after the failed referendum in 2017, which coincided with an increase in GDP. There is also a resurgence of the desire for independence after the onset of the pandemic at the end of 2019 when the GDP of the region



plummets. This graph follows the result of Figure 1 and 2, in that during times of economic prosperity the support for independence decreases, but it increases during times of economic distress.

(Figure 3)

The next question that I analyzed was, “Creu que Catalunya ha assolit...,” which translates to mean, “Believes that Catalonia has achieved ...” The participants were asked to choose one of the following responses: too much autonomy, a sufficient level of autonomy, an insufficient level of autonomy, unknown, or no answer. I paid special attention to the responses reflecting an insufficient level of support for autonomy. The graph is displayed in Figure 4.



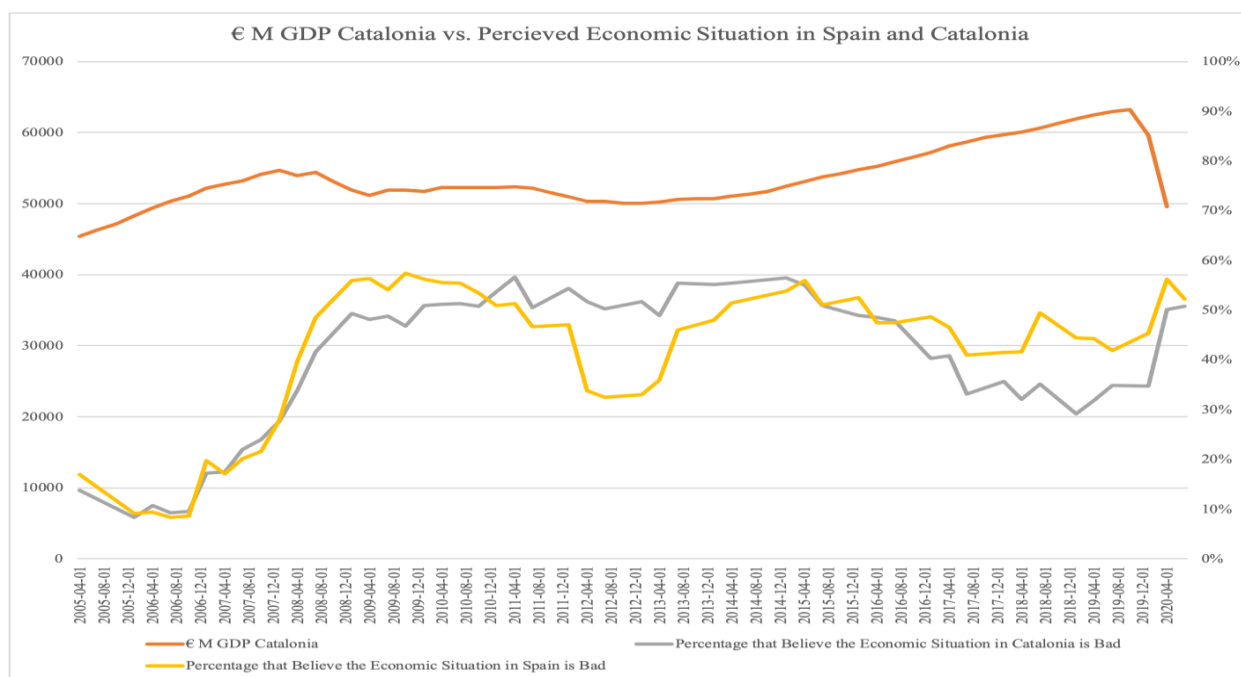
(Figure 4)

As indicated by the graph, it is apparent that there has been a positive trend. This indicates that participants' belief in insufficient levels have risen on average since the time when this survey began in 2005. The lowest recorded percentage was in the fourth quarter of 2006, with 51.6% in agreement with the statement that Catalonia had achieved an insufficient level of autonomy. The highest percentage recorded was in the second quarter of 2013 at 72.5%. As displayed in Figure 4, when the GDP of Catalonia was at one of its lowest points the percentage of agreement with the belief that there are insufficient levels of autonomy rises to its highest percentage of agreement intersecting with the GDP data line. However, the correlation coefficient for these two variables is 0.1, which is a weak positive correlation. Again, the graph demonstrates and increase in the belief that there are insufficient levels of autonomy around the

crises, which tend to coincide with a decrease in GDP. This graph differs, however, in the time period of the pandemic.

The next question that I analyzed was, “Vostè com valora l’actual situació econòmica de Catalunya/Espanya?” This translates to mean, “How do you assess the current economic situation in Catalonia / Spain?” The participants of the survey were asked to select one of seven options: bad, very bad, good, neither bad nor good, no answer, unknown, or very good. For the purpose of this thesis, I analyzed the responses of good, bad, and very bad. The participants were asked to answer this question for both their home region of Catalonia, and Spain as a whole.

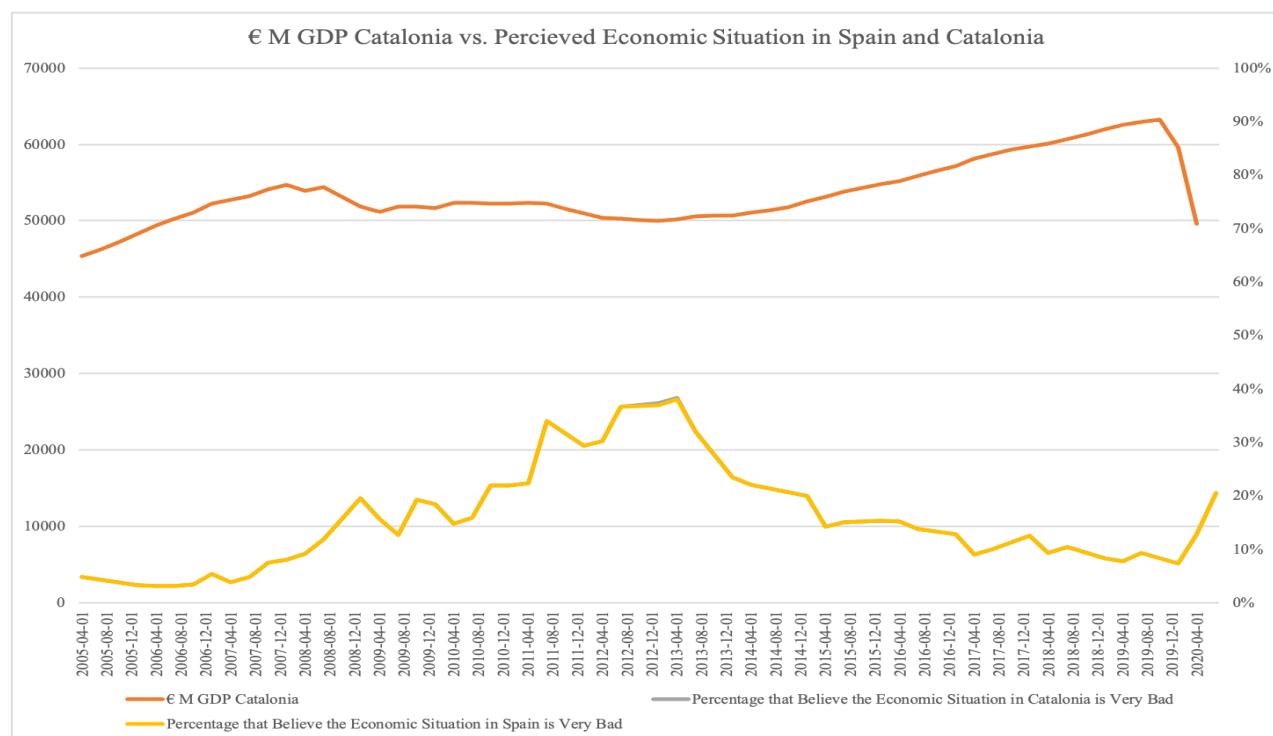
The first response that I investigated was the extent of the participants' belief that the economic situation in Catalonia and Spain was bad. The percentages analyzed in the graphs is the percentage of the participants that agreed with this particular statement for Catalonia and for Spain. In both instances, there is a positive trend, indicating that the population believes the economic situation in both Catalonia and Spain is becoming worse from 2005 to 2020. The graph is shown in Figure 5.



(Figure 5)

The lowest percentage point in the trend line of the percentage that believes the economic situation is bad in Catalonia is 8.4% in the first quarter of 2006 before the economic crisis, and the highest percentage point being in the first quarter of 2015 at 56.5%. The responses for the percentage that believes the economic situation in Spain is bad have similar lowest percentages at 8.3% in the third quarter of 2006, and similar highest percentages in the fourth quarter of 2009 during the economic crisis at 57.4%. The correlation between GDP and the perceived economic situation in Catalonia and Spain is -0.1 and 0.5 respectively.

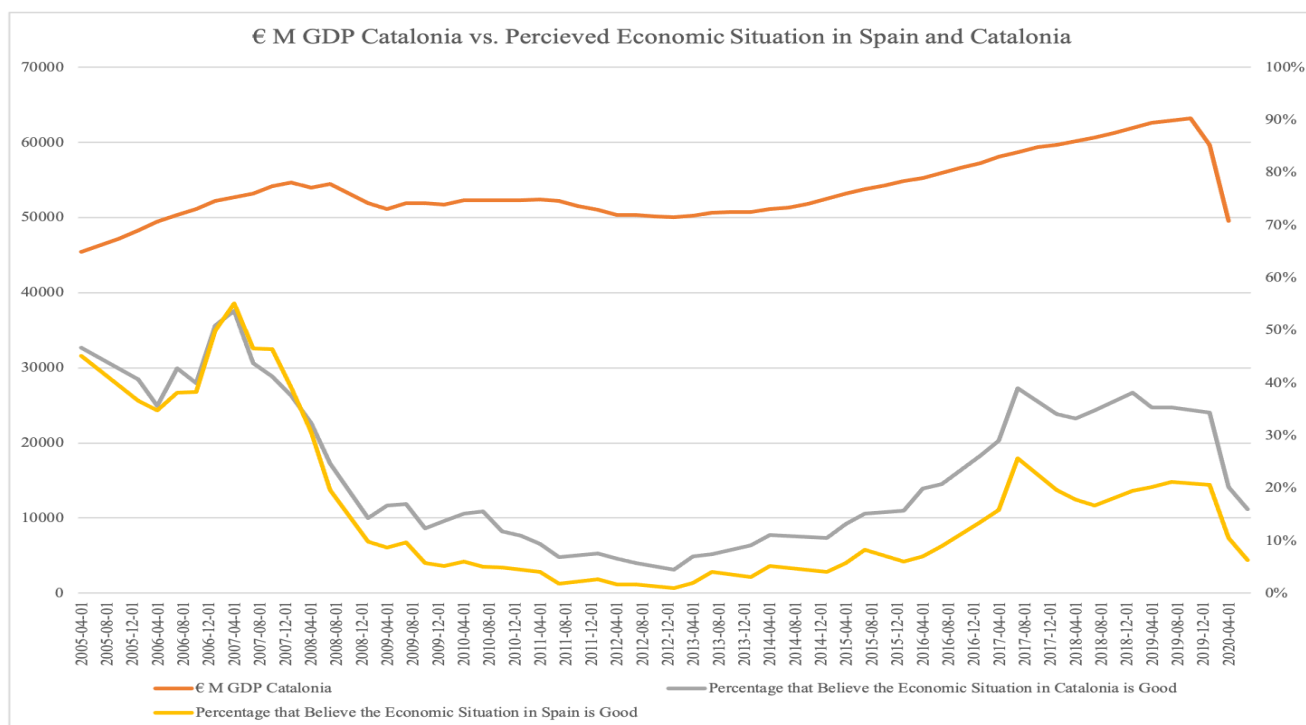
The next response that I analyzed was the participants' belief that the economic situation in Catalonia and Spain was very bad. Similar to Figures 5 there is a positive trend in the responses that the economic situation in both Catalonia and the country as a whole is worsening, as shown in Figure 6.



(Figure 6)

The two lines nearly mirror each other, with only slight variations. The highest percentage of agreement with the percentage that believes the economic situation in Catalonia is very bad was 38.3% in the second quarter of 2013, while the lowest percentage of agreement was in the second quarter of 2006 at 3.2%. The highest percentage of agreement that believes the economic situation in Spain is very bad was also in the second quarter of 2013 at 38.3%, and the lowest was in the second and third quarters of 2006 at 3.2%.

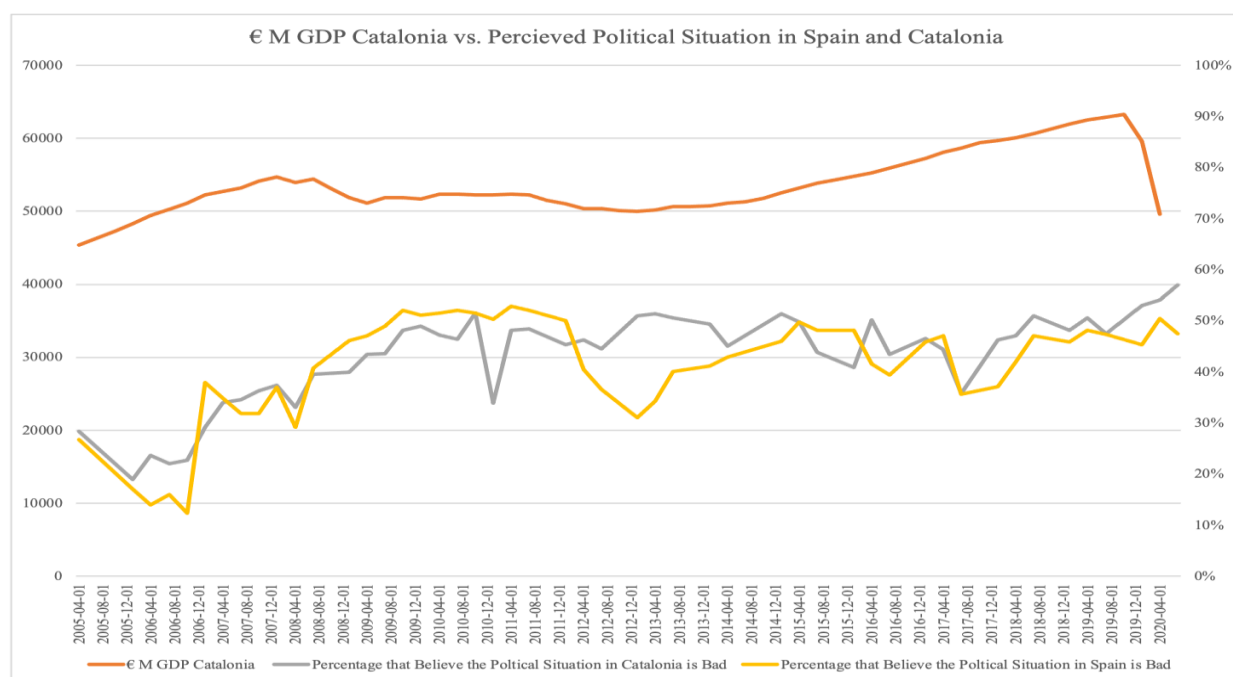
The last response that I analyzed was the percentage of participants that believed that the economic situation in Catalonia and Spain was good. Unlike the positive trend exhibited in the previous responses that I analyzed, there is a negative trend in the responses. These responses, coupled with the two previous responses, indicate that, overall, the participants believed the economic situation in both Catalonia and Spain is getting worse. The correlation of between the GDP of Catalonia and the percentage of agreement that believes the economic situation is good in Spain and Catalonia is 0.1 and 0.3 respectively. These responses are shown in Figure 7.



(Figure 7)

The next question that I analyzed was, “Com qualificaria vostè la situació política actual de Catalunya/Espanya?” This translates to mean, “How would you describe the current political situation in Catalonia / Spain?” The participants of the survey were again asked to select one of seven options: bad, very bad, good, neither bad nor good, no answer, unknown, or very good. For the purpose of this thesis, I analyzed the responses of good, bad, and very bad. The participants were asked to answer this question pertaining to both their home region of Catalonia, and Spain as a whole.

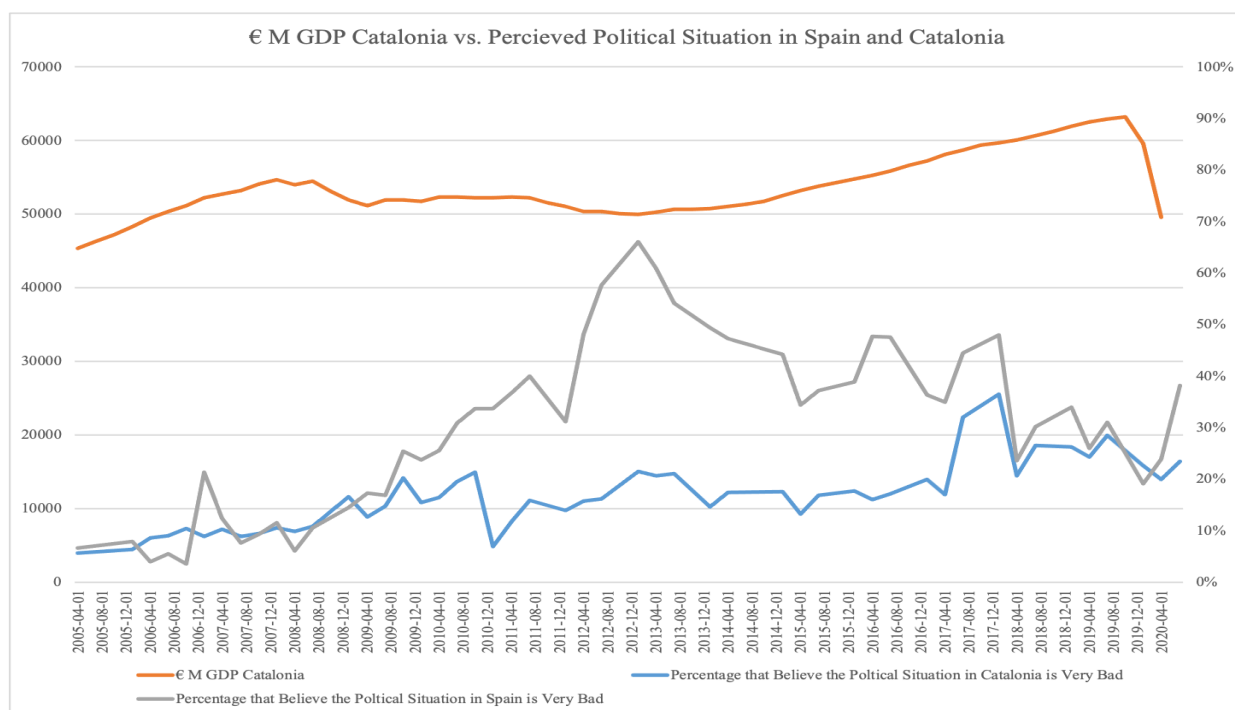
The first response that I analyzed was the participants' belief that the current political situation in Catalonia and Spain was bad. The percentage change shown in the graphs refers to the percentage of the participants that agreed with this particular statement. The positive trend, in both instances, indicates that the respondents believe the economic situation in both Catalonia and Spain is becoming worse from 2005 to 2020. The data is shown in Figure 8.



(Figure 8)

The highest percentage of agreement with this particular response shown for the belief that the political situation in Catalonia is bad, 56.5%, was exhibited in the third quarter of 2020, while the lowest percentage of agreement was exhibited in the first quarter of 2006 at 19%. The highest percentage who believe that the political situation in Spain is bad was also in the second quarter of 2011 at 52.8%, while the lowest was in the fourth quarter of 2006 at 12.4%. As illustrated by both graphs, there has been a somewhat steady increase in the percentage of agreement with the bad political situation in both Spain and Catalonia. The correlation coefficient between GDP in Catalonia and the responses in regards to Spain and Catalonia are both 0.3 indicating a moderate positive correlation. Figure 8 shows significant decreases during the times of the economic and political crises, with a slightly smaller decrease during the pandemic crisis. Both graphs indicate that the responses have not returned to the lower percentages presented in the early 2000s.

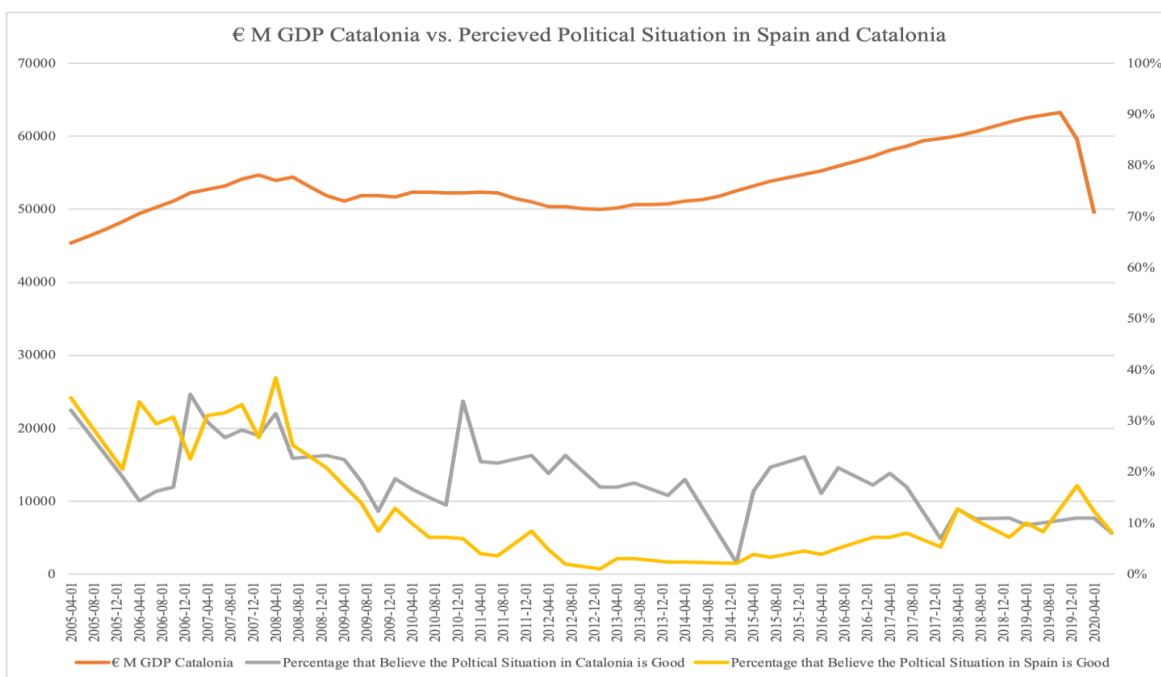
The next response that I analyzed was the participants' belief that the economic situation in Catalonia and Spain was very bad. Similar to that shown in Figure 8, a positive trend in the responses indicated that the current political situation in both Catalonia and the country as a whole is worsening. These findings are displayed in Figure 9.



(Figure 9)

The highest percentage of agreement that the political situation in Catalonia is very bad shown in Figure 9, 36.5%, was exhibited in the first quarter of 2018, while the lowest percentage of agreement occurred in the second quarter of 2005 at 5.6%. The highest percentage that believes the political situation in Spain is very bad was also in the first quarter of 2013 at 66.1%, while the lowest was in the fourth quarter of 2006 at 3.9%. The highest percentage of agreement in the perception that the political situation within Spain was very bad, coincide with the political crisis. There is also a decrease at the beginning of the pandemic crisis, which could be attributed to unhappiness with the central government's handling of the public system. Similar to the trends displayed in Figure 8, this trend indicates a steady increase in the view that the current political situation in both Catalonia and Spain is very bad, which coincides with the responses that claim the current political situation is good. The correlation coefficient between GDP in Catalonia and

the belief that the political situation in Catalonia is bad is 0.6, and the correlation coefficient with regard to Spain was 0.1. The data in Figure 10 displays a negative trend.



(Figure 10)

The highest percentage of agreement with this particular response, shown in Figure 10 for the responses for Catalonia, 35.2%, which was exhibited in the first quarter of 2007, while the lowest percentage of agreement was in the first quarter of 2015 at 2.2%. The lowest percentage of agreement with the statement in regards to Spain was also in the first quarter of 2013 at 66.1%, while the highest was in the fourth quarter of 2006 at 3.9%. The correlation coefficient between GDP in Catalonia and the Perceived (Good) Political situation in Spain and Catalonia is -0.2 and -0.4 respectively.

Below in Figure 11, I have calculated the correlation coefficient between the GDP in Catalonia and the specific time series of each aforementioned crisis.

Baròmetre d'Opinió Política [Political Opinion Barometer] Questions/Statements	Correlation coefficient during the time of the financial crisis (2008)	Correlation coefficient during the time of the Political Crisis (2017)	Correlation coefficient during the time of the Pandemic Crisis (2020)
"Believes that Catalonia should remain an autonomous community in Spain.	0.73	-0.78	-0.78
"Believes that Catalonia should become an independent state.	-0.74	0.69	0.98
"Believes that Catalonia should become a federal state in Spain.	0.70	0.91	-0.29
"Believes that Catalonia has achieved an insufficient level of autonomy."	-0.64	0.70	0.66
"How do you assess the current economic situation in Catalonia" Good	0.87	0.71	0.98
"How do you assess the current economic situation in Catalonia" Bad	-0.71	-0.68	-0.97
"How do you assess the current economic situation in Catalonia" Very Bad	-0.81	0.00	-0.83
"How do you assess the current economic situation in Spain" Good	0.81	0.62	0.98

“How do you assess the current economic situation in Spain” Bad	0.12	-0.89	-1	
“How do you assess the current economic situation in Spain” Very Bad	-0.81	0.00	-0.83	
“How do you assess the current political situation in Catalonia” Good	0.40	-0.80	-0.69	
“How do you assess the current political situation in Catalonia” Bad	-0.62	-0.16	-0.79	
“How do you assess the current political situation in Catalonia” Very Bad	-0.58	0.86	0.88	
“How do you assess the current political situation in Spain” Good	0.76	-0.63	-0.18	
“How do you assess the current political situation in Spain” Bad	0.07	-0.77	-0.80	
“How do you assess the current political situation in Spain” Very Bad	-0.79	0.88	0.35	

(Figure 11: Correlation Coefficient during the times series of each Crisis)

My trend analysis highlights the opinions of the people of Catalonia from 2005 to present day. The desire for autonomy and statehood in a federal Spain exhibit negative trends, while the desire to become an independent state Spain exhibit positive trends. Figure 1 shows increases during the times of the economic and political crisis, which coincides with economic downturn in the region. This would suggest that during the support for independence rises during times of economic downturn, while the support for remaining within Spain decreases. The trend exhibited in Figure 4 with regard to insufficient levels of autonomy in Catalonia also exhibits a positive trend. As in Figures 2 and 3, there is an increase during the times of the political and economic crisis, however, there is a decrease during the time of the pandemic crisis. Figure 5, which examine the trends coinciding with the responses that the economic situation in Spain and Catalonia is bad, exhibit positive trends. They both show increases during the time of the economic crisis, but both show a decrease during the political crisis, which could indicate the relationship between economic prosperity and a decreased desire for secession. Figure 6 also demonstrate an increase during the time of the pandemic which loosely coincides with an increase in Figure 3, which displays the trend for the support for the formation of an independent state. Figures 7 that depicts the trends in the agreement that the situation in both Spain and Catalonia is very bad, follow the trends displayed in Figure 5. Figure 7 depicts the agreement that the economic situation in Spain and Catalonia is good. Both trend lines display a negative trend, falling significantly during the economic crisis and the pandemic crisis. There is actually and increase during the political crisis, but the desire to form an independent state does not abate. Figures 8 through 10 examine the political situation within Spain and Catalonia. In Figure 8, which examines the agreement with the statement that the political situation in Spain and Catalonia is bad, both exhibit a positive trend. Both figures depict an increase during the economic and pandemic crises, but a decrease during the political crisis.

Figure 9 which displays the agreement with the statement that the political situation in Catalonia is very bad displays increases during all of the crises. Figure 10, which depicts the agreement with the statement that the political situation within Catalonia and Spain is good both display a negative trend. There are decreases in participants' agreement during the aforementioned crises. Examining the trends leads to the conclusion that during times of crisis, the regionalist movement experiences an increase. The opinion of the political and economic situations within Spain and Catalonia tend to change during times of crisis, indicating that there is a connection between economic and political stability and the desire for an independent state.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I performed historical examination and trend analysis to examine the relationship between the desire for a politically independent state in Catalonia and the key economic indicators during the times of crisis. The struggle for independence had been initially driven by the desire for linguistic and cultural recognition, while the struggle for independence is increasingly focused on the economic and political spheres. The situation in Catalonia increasingly reflects the explanations put forth by the literature on the political economy of secession, highlighting the link between fiscal grievances and the desire to secede.

Throughout its history, Catalonia has expressed its desire to secede from Spain at critical, crisis-like junctures, which, “are usually understood as macro events, such as war, regime change, etc. that alter the course of history in the societies in which they occur.”²⁹ The economic crisis of

²⁹ Lecours, André, and Jean-François Dupré. “The Emergence and Transformation of Self-Determination Claims in Hong Kong and Catalonia: A Historical Institutional Perspective.” *Ethnicities* 20, no. 1 (2018): 3–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796818785937>.

2008, the political crisis of 2017, and the pandemic crisis of 2020 could be cited as critical junctures that could lead to transformative events. A major crisis could be, “a crucial turning point for a social movement that dramatically increases or decreases the level of mobilization,” in the regionalist movement in Catalonia.³⁰ While critical junctures and transformative events are usually identified after a long period of time, “the suddenness of these changes suggests that they were linked to events of a transformative nature.”³¹ My analysis presented in this thesis sought to discover a possible relationship between the times of crisis and increased public support for the Catalan secessionism. The trend analysis indicates that there is a weak connection between times of economic disparity, which is a reflection of crisis, and the desire for an independent Catalonia. I also highlighted the related effects of the political and economic situation in Spain and Catalonia. While the future of Catalonia in regards to independence is unclear, the increasing general trend in the desire for an independent state, coupled with the trends of the perceived severity of the economic and political situations in Spain and Catalonia, indicate a hidden deterioration of the relationship between the region and the central government. My analysis only shows a weak support for my hypothesis, but this question could be better answered only by conducting a complex economic analysis.

³⁰ Hess D and Martin B (2006) Repression, backfire, and the theory of transformative events. *Mobilization* 11(1): 249–267.

³¹ Sewell WH (1996) Historical events as transformations of structures: Inventing revolution at the Bastille. *Theory and Society* 25(6): 841–881.

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