Political unrest in Spain

What is the issue?

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Catalonia secession movement has created a political instability in Spain and in European Union.

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What is Catalonia secession movement?

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- Catalonia is an autonomous community of Spain in the north-east end of the Iberian Peninsula and it was historically an autonomous region of the Iberian Peninsula.
- However, its autonomy was never recognised despite having its own language, laws, and customs.
- Many sovereigns tried to impose the Spanish language and laws in order to culturally unify the kingdom.
- This fuelled Catalan separatism and call for complete independence continued to grow.
- The 2006 statute of autonomy was reversed by the constitutional court in 2010 in a move now widely seen as triggering the current crisis.
- Recently unofficial referendums on independence have been held in Catalonia, feeding on rising support for independence in the wake of the Euro Zone crisis and consequent austerity regimes.
- This resulted in a 90 per cent vote for yes, though on a low turnout of 43 per cent, with many against independence thought to have refrained from participating.

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How Spain government responded to the referendum?

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- Spain administration acted quickly, getting the referendum declared illegal by the nation’s constitutional court, and confiscating material and shutting down websites.
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- It held off a full independence declaration stating the declaration would be suspended to allow for talks with the central government.
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- Around 10,000 police were deployed across the region for the referendum and there has been use of force by the government that resulted in hundreds of injuries, strikes.
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- There has been “excessive use of force” across the region, even old aged protestors were also not spared.
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- Recently Spanish union government warned Catalonia’s autonomy could be suspended if the secession demands are raised.
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- Demonstrations have in recent days paralysed parts of Catalonia, an area crucial to the wider Spanish economy, with fears that the unrest could hurt investment into Spain.
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How Spain’s unrest is seen in the region?

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- The secessionist movement comes amidst similar upsurges elsewhere in the continent and the rise of extreme tendencies.
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- The movement coincides with Brexit and the rise of the far left, and right across Europe and beyond suggests that there is a wider sense of dissatisfaction.
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- European nations were seeking opportunities thrown up by the uncertainty around Brexit.
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- Governments including Germany and Britain have expressed their support for Spanish unity.
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Way forward

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- The Catalonian movement rises a question on positive economic future on which the independent nation could be based.
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- The situation is a powerful reminder of the limited benefits of heavy handed tactics.
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- The road forward remains unclear, joint initiative between Spain’s political parties would work on changes to the constitution, though this is set to report only in the next six months.
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Source: Business Line

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