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# Judy Asks: Can Spain Keep Together?

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My short answer is: I very much hope so! Spain is enduring the most serious challenge to its territorial integrity since October 1934, when the Catalan authorities rose against the democratically elected government of the second republic and declared independence. This tragic episode triggered the suspension of the 1932 Catalan Statute of Autonomy and the imprisonment of the rebels, a precedent some seem determined to emulate.

However, history need not repeat itself, and Catalonia's secession from Spain (which would probably lead to the collapse of its semi-federal state of autonomies) can still be averted if common sense can be made to prevail.

Recent opinion polls tell us that most Catalans do not favour independence, as the recent referendum has confirmed. Furthermore, the majority regard themselves as both Spanish and Catalan (in varying degrees), while only 25 percent say they are exclusively Catalan; and most Catalans would like to determine their future in a legally-binding referendum sanctioned by the Spanish authorities.

This being the case, it should be possible to find a peaceful, negotiated solution to the current stalemate, which could lead to a revamped Statute of Autonomy and a far-reaching constitutional reform. Of course this will never satisfy the hard-line secessionists who are tearing Catalan society apart and threatening Spain's overall stability, but it might be enough to bring many moderate disaffected Catalans back into the fold. The alternative is simply too awful to contemplate.