Spain is experiencing a severe constitutional crisis as a result of the Catalan independence challenge. After the declaration of unconstitutionality of the reform of the Statute of Catalan autonomy by the Spanish Constitutional Court in 2010, the Parliament of Catalonia started to call for a referendum on self-determination in Catalonia. Since then, conflicts have increased: the different Catalan governments, supported by a close parliamentary majority in Catalonia, have tried to hold this referendum in violation of the Constitutional Court’s prohibition. Nevertheless, independentist claims could be channeled through a constitutional reform. The greatest tension took place recently when the Catalan Parliament approved the Acts founding the Catalan republic in September, and the Catalan Govern decided to hold the referendum on October 1, 2017. The National Government, with the approval of the Senate, activated article 155 of the Constitutions that provides for mechanism of federal coercion. The Government of the Nation dissolved the Catalan Parliament, convoked regional elections, and assumed the powers of the Catalan government, until a new one was elected. On December 21, 2017 elections were held and the “constitutionalist” party Ciudadanos won, but the pro-independence parties got a meager majority. These pro-independence parties have so far continued with the struggle, although some of its leaders are in preventive detention and others have escaped to other countries, being prosecuted for serious crimes. The crisis has raised many juridical and constitutional questions: Could the break promoted by the Catalan institutions be qualified as a coup d’état? Is it constitutionally possible to hold a self-determination referendum in Spain? Has the State intervention activating article 155 of the Constitution been constitutionally legitimate? Is it in accordance with the principles of a parliamentary system to invest a president absconded in another country “via Skype”?

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