

Where is the will to negotiate?

The process towards the independence of Catalonia is becoming ever more popular and nothing can stop it now. Many Catalans in 2009 did not consider independence but now, in 2013, they see no other option than a referendum to vote 'yes'. Surprisingly, during this time, the Spanish government has not changed its position at all, and continues to ignore what is happening in Catalonia.

On September 11 "The Catalan Way" was celebrated. One million six hundred thousand supporters of Catalan independence joined hands through 89 towns and 400 kilometres across Catalonia in an orderly human chain. They did so following the specific instructions of the organisers, because they want to vote and because they want independence.

Despite the fact that the Spanish government flatly rejects it, there will be a referendum, for the simple reason that democracy is expressed by voting, and not being allowed to vote means no democracy. At this point, what remains to be seen, is whether the Spanish government will start negotiating in good faith.

Catalonia will follow its own path. If there is no negotiation, on the day of Inde-

pendence, there will be serious problems in implementing state structures that had not been negotiated with the government in Madrid. It will be more expensive, but it can be done.

On the Spanish side, if no agreement has been reached for secession, on the day of Independence there will be serious issues of trust on international markets. Uni-

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lateral secession of a territory can be considered a major setback in the stability of a country. Spain is a country that has already suffered four years of public deficit of around 10%. This is a huge imbalance that, according to data of the Bank of Spain, leads to the need to issue public debt on an average weekly basis of 5.7 billion euros, of which 1.5 billion are – and this is the most worrying fact – net financing needs.

Catalonia accounts for 19% of Spain's GDP and 20% of its tax revenue. There is no need to be an alarmist to consider that there will be serious instability in the market of Spanish debt issuance that will affect Spain's treasury. The sovereign debt risk premium will also be affected, a fact that will logically exacerbate the crisis, and it will also affect the Spanish stock market, and the credibility of the Spanish financial system, as it is highly exposed to the Spanish sovereign debt.

Game Theory simplifies decisions. It is obvious that a scenario without negotiation makes no sense. The question is: When will negotiations start? There are two scenarios: first, the Spanish government may voluntarily begin to negotiate the terms of the referendum process with Catalonia, or second, it can continue to ignore the process until the last minute when it will be forced to face an unavoidable problem, unless it is first compelled to do so by its Euro-partners.

For me, there is only one key question for the Catalan process: Will Mariano Rajoy sit down to negotiate in time, or will he wait until he is forced to and the situation is out of control?

RANDOM THOUGHTS

TERRY PARRIS, writer

November, all about continuity

Thomas Hood, the poet (1798-1845) had a dim view of November: "No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease,/ No comfortable feel in any member/ No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees,/ No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds,/ November!"

One might think that poor Thomas had a bad bout of indigestion since certainly there are lovely autumn fruits such as the

prolific pumpkins in all shapes, colours and sizes. There are veggies to make delicious soups: parsnips, turnips, cabbages, celery, onions and, of course, the ever-popular potato.

November is all about continuity. The plants that have been producing all summer will have been added to the compost heap. In a year's time they'll be turned into fertile soil.

In the organic vegetable garden that my grand-daughter and her husband run, they are planting spinach, chards and lettuce to be picked during winter. They are also planting garlic cloves to be eaten later as spring garlic; also onions to be shored up with earth to make the sprouting shoots long and white. Our taste-buds water when we anticipate these as *calçots*. Then, let's lift our glasses to November!

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"I would not have any problem with a self-governing Catalonia within the EU"

Graham Watson, chairman of the Liberal Group at the European Parliament

Despite Spanish efforts to threaten Catalonia with a dark future outside the EU in case of independence, more and more voices are saying the opposite.