

Catalonia's future according to Margallo

Spain's foreign minister, José Manuel García-Margallo, argues that an independent Catalonia would be small and without any international power, as only large countries can be powerful in the international arena.

OK, so let's examine this argument.

Firstly, Spain is bigger than Catalonia but it doesn't have much power internationally. In fact, it isn't even in the G8 and it could be said that recently it just does what Germany dictates. Could it be they are still thinking about the Spanish Empire and have delusions of grandeur?

Secondly, Catalonia – and this is what interests us – currently has NO international power whatsoever. Our voice isn't even heard within Spain. So how can we expect to be heard worldwide if we remain as part of Spain?

Thirdly, and most importantly, what interests those supporting independence – international power or a better standard of living? I'd say we are all in this because we want a better life.

So the question is, can a small country like Catalonia provide comfortably for its people? Can it deliver better social and economic development?

Let's look at some international indices

showing the social and economic development of countries.

The first is the classic per capita income, adjusted for parity of purchasing power (PPP). This index has the following ranking: 1. Qatar, 2. Luxembourg, 3. Singapore, 4. Brunei, 5. Norway, 6. Hong Kong, 7. USA, 8. UAE, 9. Switzerland, 10. Australia, 11. Canada, 12. Austria, 13. Ireland, 14. Sweden, 15. Netherlands, 16. Iceland, 17. Taiwan, 18. Germany, 19. Kuwait, 20. Denmark, and...31. Spain. (Source: IMF)

We can see that there is a group of small neighbouring countries that enjoy the highest level of GDP per capita in the world, with Spain relegated and surpassed by countries with little power.

But per capita income is criticised for being too economic and not social enough. So, let's examine another, the Human Development Index (HDI). This index measures health and education as well as GNP-PPP and is drawn up by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The HDI ranking of countries for 2013 is as follows:

1. Norway, 2. Australia, 3. USA, 4. Netherlands, 5. Germany, 6. New Zealand, 7. Ireland, 8. Sweden, 9. Switzerland, 10. Japan, and... 23. Spain.

In this case there are no distortions from the Persian Gulf. It is also clear that being a small country in no way prevents a high level of social and economic development.

However, this index must be improved, because if much of the wealth is in the hands of a few it cannot be said that the economic development is satisfactory.

For this reason, the UNDP provides a HDI adjusted for inequality (IHDI), which evaluates more positively countries with fewer social inequalities. The ranking is: 1. Norway, 2. Australia, 3. Sweden, 4. Netherlands, 5. Germany, 6. Ireland, 7. Switzerland, 8. Iceland, 9. Denmark, 10. Slovenia, and... 20. Spain.

How great it is to be a small country! Powerful Spain has been surpassed by some very small countries.

So, it's clear that being small or large doesn't adversely affect the standard of living of the inhabitants and an independent Catalonia can aspire to improve the welfare of Catalans markedly.

And that is what this is about, minister, not about international power. When two million people take to the streets to demand independence for Catalonia, they are asking for better lives.

Yes, Minister!

GALLERY

TERRY PARRIS writer

Mischa

My cat Mischa is a master opportunist. She was a street-cat, rescued from the streets of Manlleu. Perhaps that's where she learnt her craft.

I have a dog, Tilly, of whom she is very wary. When I adopted Mischa I found her moods very variable, from scratching to neutral (but never purring) so I decided she should live outside but Mischa decided otherwise. She wanted to live and sleep in-

side, preferably on my bed.

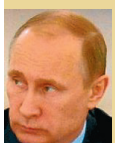
I like to sleep with the windows open, and this was her opportunity. From the top of the garage she would step delicately on to the thin branches of the wisteria growing over the facade of the house. Light as a gymnast she would leap from the last twig on to the window-box of geraniums and sit there until I opened the window.

I was forced to sleep with the windows

shut. Nothing daunted Mischa. With excellent timing, she waited for any visitors to arrive and as the door opened she was inside in a flash. Conscious of the dog she waited until Tilly was out of the kitchen, and lapped the water-bowl and ate the dog-food before retiring to my bed.

'Will no-one rid me of this meddlesome priest?' (Shakespeare). But actually I love Mischa. She now lives permanently inside!

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"They say we violate international law. Good they remember international law exists. Better late than never" Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation

We must admit that sadly, Putin is right. Neither he nor any other world superpower leader respects international law when it is in conflict with their own interests.