

# Independence from a **statehood** viewpoint

**F**ew in Catalonia have doubts on the urgency to liberate the region from Madrid's thrall, whether for economic, political, or administrative reasons. Yet, people have not reached total agreement on the way out of the conundrum. So, while some argue that a new federal pact will, by force of nature, eventually come about, a vast majority has consistently expressed their view for over five years that independence is the only solution, even reckoning on the inherent difficulties of achieving it. There is common agreement that the federal option was blown up by Madrid itself in 2010, when the Spanish Constitutional Court shattered the newly-drafted Statute of Autonomy, which had been approved by the Spanish Parliament in 2006 and by a huge majority of Catalans in an ad-hoc referendum the same year.

If we look at the Federalist solution, we see in it the notion that building new nation-states is to be avoided at any cost; this seems especially true when they focus on the developed world, where things like borders are tainted by negative concepts. Many of those within the federal 'party' claim that new nation-states contradict a utopian world without borders. Curiously enough, under this view, multi-national countries, each of them the result of multiple historical processes and

accidents, ought to be accepted uncritically.

In fact, without arguing that nation-states are good per se, it is worth referring to Dani Rodrick's "Who needs the nation state". Here, Rodrick convincingly argues that the nation-state, although having been constantly dismissed by radical groups, from the Trotskyists to the liberal globalists, "has proved remarkably resilient and remains the main determinant of the global distribution of income, the primary locus of market-supporting institutions, and the chief repository of personal attachments and affiliations." In keeping with this view, I would like to add that nation-states are the framework with which people and firms contribute to the public good by the exchange of services and investments, as well as the sovereign institution that guarantees a certain level of wealth, representation and protection. Hence, if we move to the Catalan debate, we could argue that the Catalans who struggle for independence simply seek a better way to administer power and resources, given the inability of Spain's government to manage the country's inherent heterogeneity.

## No fear of debate

Therefore, those in Catalonia who are pushing for the political independence of the region should not shy away from en-

gaging in a discussion involving the idea of the nation-state. By shifting the debate to the nation-state issue, it becomes crystal clear that within the Spanish political framework Catalonia lags in many areas. A glaring instance are the constants in public infrastructure investments, irrespective of the political shifts in the central government: the policies of both PP and PSOE (the only two ruling parties in Spain since the early 1980s) have prioritised the development of all sorts of networks within, around and towards Madrid, with very little economic basis, and, worst of all, at the expense of crucial developments, such as the Mediterranean railway corridor.

The topics related to Madrid's problems with Catalonia's aspect of heterogeneity, could follow suit: for example, with the trimming of powers from Madrid in areas such as energy poverty, soil and air contamination from industry or retail opening hours, all of which need to be dealt with by Catalonia's institutions –at least if we believe Madrid's motto that Spain is one of the most highly decentralized countries on Earth. In the end, all nation-statehood supporting Catalans are claiming is a status that is nothing more and nothing less than the standard within developed nations.

## RANDOM THOUGHTS

TERRY PARRIS Writer

# Going more than a little **crazy**

**I** have the distinct feeling that this month is going to be crazy. If, in May, I could look out of my window and see snow falling on the flowering apple and pear trees, then in June, anything is possible! With that thought, an absurd children's rhyming song came up into my head: "Mairzy doats and dozy doats and liddle lamzy divey

A kiddley divey too, wouldn't you?"

But really, it is spelt like this:

"Mares eat oats and does eat oats and little lambs eat ivy,

A kid'll eat ivy, too, wouldn't you?"

The song makes little sense, yet in 1943, when it was first played in New York it was an instant success. Does this prove anything about the American and then the British public? It could be that we all like something crazy, something light-hearted,

something ridiculous.

So what is my bizarre suggestion for us? We should go a little mad, use our imagination to do something different: be a pillion-passenger on a fast motorbike, learn to drive when fear has prevented it, get on the attractions of Port Aventura, climb rocks, go skinny-dipping, dye your hair electric-blue. Let's do something crazy this month – we may surprise ourselves!

VERBA DOCENT, EXEMPLA TRAHUNT NEIL STOKES nstokes@cataloniatoday.cat



*"I consider it inexcusable to have to reiterate to you not only the impossibility of taking part in what you propose but also the impossibility for your Government to raise such a grave threat to coexistence"* Mariano Rajoy, Spanish PM

So, that's a 'no', then?