

## Catalan leader will fall short of majority to press for independence, polls say

Key Spanish media predict next Sunday's regional elections will leave Artur Mas's party without mandate to hold referendum

Martin Roberts in Madrid  
guardian.co.uk, Sunday 18 November 2012 13.15 GMT



Artur Mas, leader of Catalonia's regional government, called for early elections and a referendum after an independence rally in Barcelona drew an estimate 1.5 million people. Photograph: Quique Garcia/AFP/Getty Images

Catalan president Artur Mas's party will fall short of the overall majority it needs at regional elections on 25 November to hold a referendum over [Catalonia's independence from Spain](#), opinion polls published in several Spanish newspapers on Sunday have predicted.

A survey by the Metroscopia polling group in El País, Spain's biggest selling non-sports paper, predicted Convergència i Unió's (CiU) haul would be unchanged at 62 seats in the 135-member Catalan parliament after next Sunday's polls. Meanwhile, Barcelona-based daily La Vanguardia forecast the conservative party would garner 62-64 legislators in the assembly, compared with the 68 they would need to govern without the support of six other parties expected to win seats.

[Mas, who has led a minority government for two years](#), called for early elections and a referendum after [an independence rally in the regional capital Barcelona on 11 September drew an estimated 1.5 million people](#), equivalent to about one in five of the north-eastern region's inhabitants.

A recent survey by Catalan government-funded research group CEO predicts 57% of Catalans would vote to break away from Spain. However, the central government has said a referendum in the rich but indebted region would be unconstitutional, and the constitutional court in Madrid blocked a move to hold a similar vote in the northern Basque country as recently as 2008.

Another potential stumbling block for a separation has been raised by doubts over whether an independent Catalonia could remain in the [European Union](#). When asked on Saturday at the Iberoamerican summit held in Cádiz, European commission president José Manuel Barroso replied that the bloc would stand by rules drawn up in 2004, ie states that secede would have to apply for membership.

"The legal situation has not changed since 2004. The Lisbon treaty has not introduced any modifications in that respect," he said.

Catalonia has a distinct language and culture and, like all of Spain's 17 regions, enjoys considerable autonomy, but the CiU is demanding the right to collect its own taxes and

send a share to Madrid, an arrangement similar to the Basque country.

Less at the forefront of the campaign has been the deep spending cuts which have sparked massive protests across crisis-hit Spain. Mas's government had to ask Madrid for a €5bn bailout in August for Catalonia, which is Spain's wealthiest region and accounts for 18.5% of Spain's total economic output, but also for 29% of all outstanding debt held by the country's regions.

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**Dreikaiserbund**

18 November 2012 1:31PM

A Metroscopia poll today makes interesting reading. it found that 46% of Catalans would vote for independence, 42% against. But when asked if it meant leaving the EU, 37% would vote Yes and 50% would vote No. The poll failed to ask what they would vote if independence meant Barça having to play in a Catalan league.

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**owell**

18 November 2012 1:45PM

What does Nate Silver say?

Barca fans wouldn't mind playing in the Catalan league if that meant they could focus on competing in the Champions League.

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**robrut1**

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18 November 2012 1:46PM

The will of the people should never be discarded. If the Catalans want to have their own independent country, then that is their right! Regardless of its merits. Freedom and democracy should always be sacred and non negotiable.

[Responses \(2\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)**Catalonianfiftysix**

18 November 2012 1:55PM

"... will leave Artur Mas's party without mandate to hold referendum". Right, but ... the poll says that he may get around 62-64 seats of the 68 needed. But the polls also says that parties supporting a referendum (all left) may sum between 30-34 seats more. That makes a pro-referendum total of 92 to 98 seats. Out of 138, so clearly around 2/3 of the total (or more). Not bad then ... The bad side for Artur Mas is that without majority he will have to negotiate with these other parties and some of them are anti-independence (althought pro-referendum) and some are much more radically independentist than his CiU coalition. Or not radically independentist but very leftist! In any case it seems the anti-referendum parties will only get around 22-25 seats (out of 138). And the anti-independence no more than 40-45. Interesting, isn't it?. About where Barça would play, my opinion is that business is business and the League is a Professional Association: Barça will play in the Spanish League, like Monaco plays at the French. No problem. Real Madrid needs Barça and viceversa. To play separately would kill them both, and as I say, business is business.

[Recommend? \(45\)](#)[Responses \(2\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)**amuntvalencia**

18 November 2012 2:00PM

Response to [robrut1](#), 18 November 2012 1:46PM

The problem with that (admirable) viewpoint is where do you stop? Barcelona want to be independent of Catalunya? Pimlico wants to be independent of London/UK? I want to be independent??

And what if you give independence to Catalunya and in 5 or 10 years the majority want to return to Spain? It's not like changing your clothes.

[Recommend? \(63\)](#)[Responses \(4\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)**Lusitano1**

18 November 2012 2:09PM

Not correct. The pro-independence parties would have an overwhelming majority in the Catalan parliament, even if CiU would fail to have an absolute majority. There will thus be a clear mandate to hold a referendum. And as far as the legitimacy of independence is concerned, if Slovakia could split from the Czech republic without any problem, why shouldn't Catalonia split from Spain, or Scotland from the UK?

[Recommend? \(98\)](#)[Responses \(1\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)**laasan**

18 November 2012 2:22PM

Response to [amuntvalencia](#), 18 November 2012 2:00PM

where do you stop? Barcelona want to be

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independent of Catalunya? Pimlico wants to be independent of London/UK? I want to be independent??

did Catalunya invade Barcelona, suppressed its culture and language and to this day shows a general disdain for it? did London/UK do that to Pimlico? did anyone to you? no? fail.



**CatalanPaddy**

18 November 2012 2:22PM

Wrong - the other independence parties form a majority alliance, with or without a formal coalition. The mandate for moving forward to the referendum is safe.

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**Albannach**

18 November 2012 2:27PM

Government and its mouthpiece, the MSM spreading FUD (Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt) about people's right to independence .....

Now, where have we seen this before ... actually, going on right now as we speak?

Don't know? Well, it's [This part of the comment was redacted for breaching our community standards, etc.]

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**romeoromeotango**

18 November 2012 2:34PM

Response to [Catalonianfiftysix](#), 18 November 2012 1:55PM

I hope a lot of people read your post!

I'd be a bit surprised if ERC voted against a referendum, and El Pais's poll says they'll go from 10 to 18 seats, almost double. Oops, they're (we're) also lefties!

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**browndawg**

18 November 2012 2:38PM

'..regional elections will leave Artur Mas's party without mandate to hold referendum..'

Why do you need a mandate to *hold* a referendum? A referendum is itself the machinery for granting a particular political decision legitimacy.

Whatever way the people of Catalunya choose to define their relationship with Spain, the number of parliamentary seats the CiU have is irrelevant. Nobody will be forced to vote against their conscience in a referendum.

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**amuntvalencia**

18 November 2012 2:40PM

Response to [laasan](#), 18 November 2012 2:22PM

I was responding to a specific point about the majority of catalans wanting independence.

I am not doubting that the catalans where oppressed but I think you are oversimplifying the issue here. You could argue the same for La Comunidad Valenciana, certainly El Pais Vasco and most

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parts of Spain have a grudge over suppression of culture, if not language like the valencianos and basques have.

You have also overlooked what happens if at some point after independence, the majority of catalans want to rejoin Spain (let's maybe hypothesise that most multinational companies want a head office presence in an albeit smaller Spain rather than a small Catalunya and the economic situation deteriorates; Barca get bored winning the Catalan league at a canter playing Tarragona and Figueres...).



**CanWeNotKnockIt**

18 November 2012 2:51PM

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Response to [Catalonianfiftysix](#), 18 November 2012 1:55PM

I'd have thought politics is politics and that Barcelona will not be able to play in La Liga if Catalonia becomes independent. Catalans can't have it both ways. If you want independence and all that goes with it, you have your own league and own qualification for the Champions League. Comparing Monaco and to an independent Catalonia is well wide of the mark.



**robrut1**

18 November 2012 2:52PM

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Response to [amuntvalencia](#), 18 November 2012 2:00PM

Logic and necessity will dictate the RED LINE. Besides, Catalonia is already a semi-independent region, with their own distinct language.



**phima**

18 November 2012 2:55PM

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This whole independency craze in parts of Europe leaves me baffled.

What next after Catalonia and Scotland?

Perhaps Bavaria or Sicily?

How about Hamburg or Gdansk?



**amuntvalencia**

18 November 2012 3:04PM

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Response to [robrut1](#), 18 November 2012 2:52PM

not sure what you mean by logic and necessity will dictate the RED LINE. I'd have thought the border for Catalunya is already well defined. And so what if they are already a semi independent region - not sure what your point is here?

My view is that Catalunya should have it's independence - my logic being that having a catalan passport and Barca winning La Liga Catalana every year at a canter will not be worth the reduction in importance, loss of business and economic downturn that would entail with the country being a very small part of Europe rather than an important part of Spain - big fish in a small pond to small fish in a big pond if you will.



**robrut1**

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18 November 2012 3:07PM

Response to [CatalanPaddy](#), 18 November 2012 2:22PM

By the way, I would vote no to independence. But, yes to the referendum. It would be a grave mistake for the Catalans to detach themselves from Spain at this moment, with all this economic crisis in the EU. Look at what just took place in Cadiz! Spain and Latin America, a region that continues to grow steadily, have launched a new era of cooperation. This will result in much economic prosperity for the people of both sides of the Atlantic. A united Spain can benefit the most out of this new alliance.

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**laasan**

18 November 2012 3:08PM

Response to [amuntvalencia](#), 18 November 2012 2:40PM

what happens if at some point after independence, the majority of Catalans want to rejoin Spain (let's maybe hypothesise that most multinational companies want a head office presence in an albeit smaller Spain rather than a small Catalunya and the economic situation deteriorates; Barca get bored winning the Catalan league at a canter playing Tarragona and Figueres...).

I doubt that the attitude towards independence among Catalans will change much. what could change is the attitude of all the Spaniards and foreigners living in Catalunya, who make up a massive part of the population.

a lot will depend on how well Catalunya can be integrated in the EU and EZ. if they succeed with that, there won't be any need for the multinationals to move to Spain. many global giants run their European operations from tiny Ireland after all. Catalunya is a very attractive place for companies, many people want to live here since you get everything from culture over entertainment to nature in droves, weather is great, industry is relatively advanced. it gives companies a very stable environment, the only equivalent of such an environment in Spain you'll find in the other pro-independence region, the Basque country. so as long as Catalunya can stay in the euro, companies won't move, on the contrary, an increased Catalan budget would enable even more investment into industrial and educational infrastructure.

now there's of course a massive problem with that. admission to the EU requires agreement between all member states. and given the vindictiveness the Spanish are showing towards the Catalans, to this day, I simply can not see Spain agreeing to that.

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**amuntvalencia**

18 November 2012 3:12PM

Response to [laasan](#), 18 November 2012 3:08PM

good points and well argued.

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**robrut1**

18 November 2012 3:15PM

Response to [phima](#), 18 November 2012 2:55PM

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All distinct peoples should be independent within the context of a united Europe!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Having said that, I would add that the right conditions must exist for a successful launching of a new nation. I rather be a subject of prosper greater federation than a free citizen of starving new nation!

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**samsonanddelilah**

18 November 2012 3:15PM

Different parts of Spain are run well while others are basket cases like Murcia. Independence might be the way forward. For some facts, here's why.

<http://alexthomasmahon.wordpress.com/2012/10/06/what-else-happened-on-911-updated-post/>

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**markmyreading**

18 November 2012 3:17PM

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**samsonanddelilah**

18 November 2012 3:19PM

Surely small nations function better and could still function within the EU, although it would be better if it was reorganised and central power in Brussels diminished, leaving more power to the individual countries.

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**samsonanddelilah**

18 November 2012 3:21PM

Response to [phima](#), 18 November 2012 2:55PM

And why not? They were regions before they forced to become part of their prospective countries.

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**maiki**

18 November 2012 3:22PM

So why go back "just" to 1714? Why not claim to become a Muslim nation again? Or part of Rome?

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**ViscaCatalunya**

18 November 2012 3:26PM

Catalan nationalists want to keep Mas on a leash and vote a long time and real nationalist party: ERC.

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**Johanes**

18 November 2012 3:30PM

This is a misleading article, and a very poor representation of the current situation in Catalonia.

1. The referendum does not depend on a Mas victory, it is supported in a pact by 3 other parties, and whatever happens at

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the elections, all polls show a full majority for referendum-supporting parties.

2. CiU will gain over 60 MPs while the nearest opposition party will have under 20, under all polls quoted. This is an important fact which could have been mentioned. Right-wing CiU is actually doing amazingly well to hold its own in the polls in spite of an austerity programme. Mas has considerable personal support.

3. No mention is made of the reason for Catalonia's debt - an unbalanced fiscal pact with Spain that under most serious investigations carried out, entails the loss of 8% of GDP annually, double the sustainable solidarity. This would be solved by self-determination, and is the main reason for the referendum, not an impediment.

4. Barroso's statement that Catalonia will remain outside the EU is misquoted in that it leaves out the small print, that European sources have confirmed that this does not include its "immediate reintegration".

5. "Catalonia ... like all of Spain's 17 regions, enjoys considerable autonomy" - untrue, the autonomy is only administrative and not executive, and there is currently a wave of centralisation and unification, which is what Catalans fear and which forces them to adopt an independentist stance in self-defence.

It is surprising that a UK journalist, albeit Madrid based (or should that be because Madrid based?) should misrepresent facts in this article. Since he is not as far as I have seen a regular contributor on the matter, can we just attribute these errors to ignorance, or do we have to assume that the guy has an agenda?

Or does this mark a change of tack from the Guardian which has so far has shown more sympathy to Catalan aspirations than to the Scottish independence movement? Watching with interest for some kind of explanation.



**Saloufest**

18 November 2012 3:31PM

Spain should hold a referendum over 3rd Republic instead of trying to scare Catalan voters.  
Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition.

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**Johanes**

18 November 2012 3:32PM

Correction:

4. Barroso's statement that Catalonia will remain outside the EU is misquoted in that it leaves out the small print, that European sources have confirmed that this does not **exclude** its "immediate reintegration".

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**JosepSegador**

18 November 2012 3:36PM

Some are surprised Catalans want independence...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNOiWMSF-ag>

People need to be free. For years, Spanish media has insulted us every day, and they want to "castilianize" us just like the Chinese

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wants to "chinazate" the Tibetans.

Besides this, Spain treats us like the Romans treated the conquered territories: the Romans didn't pay taxes for centuries, the conquered territories paid for them. A 9% of our GDP is subtracted from our country every year and doesn't returns in any form. This is 43% of the taxes of our country. Would you accept this ? Catalonia sees each year how at least 17000 million euros disappear. Germany is angry to have to contribute with 21200 millions of euros to European Union (some of those euros return to Germany).

Catalonia has less public workers (around 8% of the active population) than any other part of Spain (in some, the percentage is 30%), less than Germany, less than France. Spain has used our money to promote a culture of subvention. Thousands of young people prefer to wait for subventions instead of working.

The Spanish government uses its power against our cultural and economic interests. When a Catalan company tries to buy a Spanish company, they make what they can to avoid it, even preferring a German or Italian buyer instead. The Spanish embassies (they spend in it more than the UK!) are representations against us. In EU, Catalan language which has more speakers (despite centuries of persecution) than most official languages, is not official because the opposition of Spain.

We are not an independent country because the 1640 independence revolt ended in a defeat after 12 years of war against the Spanish empire (they had the American riches, and the "tercios" troops then). In 1714 we lost our institutions.



**ViscaCatalunya**

18 November 2012 3:36PM

Johanes the only articles with real depth regarding Spain are in the football section by Sid Lowe. Those artcles even give more insight in social issues playing in Spain than any of the articles in the news section.

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**clubdemusica**

18 November 2012 3:39PM

Whilst I appreciate that the media in Madrid has been manipulated to a disgraceful degree surrounding this election, making it potentially difficult for your correspondent to comment on the likely outcome of the election, this really is terrible journalism and needs severe amendment. Mas is simply one of a number of party leaders standing on a platform of the need for a referendum, or for independence. To suggest that his unpopular right wing party's failure to secure an outright majority would in someway undermine the mandate for a referendum is frankly a bit mad. At the present moment, parties campaigning for such a "mandate" are polling at circa 83%. Simply adding the likely ERC seats to the CiU would grant a substantial overall majority and mandate for the referendum. What happens at a referendum is, absolutely, open to huge doubt. But there is no doubt at all that a mandate for a referendum exists and will be confirmed on 25 November,

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whatever happens to Mas.



**jeesuswhyme**

18 November 2012 3:40PM

Response to [phima](#), 18 November 2012 2:55PM

Not sure that 'Craze' is the description for political movements which in Scotlands case goes back some 90 odd years to between the world wars at least.

Bavaria and Hamburg are part of a German Federal system which as I'm sure you know is not quite the same relationship as Catalonia, Scotland, and Gdansk have with Spain the UK and Poland respectively.

From what you say and how you say it I suspect you are baffled because you haven't taken the time to actually read anything about a subject in which you presumably have at best a limited interest but still feel the need to enlighten us with your pearls...

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**Johanes**

18 November 2012 3:43PM

Response to [laasan](#), 18 November 2012 3:08PM

laasan "now there's of course a massive problem with that. admission to the EU requires agreement between all member states. and given the vindictiveness the Spanish are showing towards the Catalans," agree on the vindictiveness, but nothing re. EU membership is decided as yet, in spite of loose talk by various leaders including the feckless (sorry but when the shoe fits ...) Barroso..

And think about it - if Spain does not recognise Catalan independence, Catalonia will not be obliged to repay its hefty but affordable (fr them) slice of the Spanish debt. Do you really think that Europe will not take measures to ensure that the debt gets paid, forcing Spain's hand?

And finally, don't forget that the referendum, which is almost sure to happen given that the vote does not depend on Mas but on 4 Catalan referendum-favouring parties, may be 4 years away. Already there is talk of what would happen in a Catalonia out of Europe (Andorra style). As you say, given the spite and continuous aggression of the Spanish state to Catalonian aspirations, a couple more years of Madrid hostility may well tip the balance into independence, Europe or no. There's plenty of very able Catalan analysts and public figures coming to the fore with this approach.

Pleasure to read your thought-provoking contrinution!

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**Johanes**

18 November 2012 3:47PM

Response to [ViscaCatalunya](#), 18 November 2012 3:36PM

ViscaCatalunya - hehe - yes I'm a fan of Sid too. Have to agree with you as regards most UK journalism on the subject. For the UK, Spain means that stupid waiter in Fawltly Towers, Mexican hats and bullfighting. Just as well Barça exists to enlighten a few that there's more to the country than that! And that it's not all bad!

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**pirro23**

18 November 2012 3:58PM

Response to [amuntvalencia](#), 18 November 2012 2:00PM

you don't need to worry about Catalonia wanting to return to Spain in ten years, in ten years even Valencia will want to leave Spain.

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18 November 2012 4:03PM

Response to [Johanes](#), 18 November 2012 3:43PM

Do you really think that Europe will not take measures to ensure that the debt gets paid, forcing Spain's hand?

good point about the debt. but there are other ways Europe can force Catalunya to pay that debt. look what happened to Iceland, they've been forced to repay the UK and Netherlands by the EU.

Already there is talk of what would happen in a Catalonia out of Europe (Andorra style)

as I said, the most important thing will be to keep the euro, which Andorra also uses.

and one thing certainly in favour of Catalunya is that it would be a net contributor to the EU budget. a good card to have in your hand, but I doubt that will change Spains mind.

[Recommend?](#) (1)[Responses](#) (0)[Report](#)[Share](#)**helenacr32**

18 November 2012 4:04PM

Response to [amuntvalencia](#), 18 November 2012 3:04PM

Interestingly, I believe, there are many reports and studies (for example, <http://wilson.cat/en/>) that defend the view that Catalonia would be quite better off on its own. Personally, I'd rather be fourth or fifth of anything in Europe rather than first of anything in Spain. And some informed people seem to believe that we have a good enough chance at succeeding as a small fish in a bigger pond than the other way around.

Not to mention, we'd be able to stop justifying ourselves all the time and end our identity debates and just get on with it. I tell you, there are many Catalans who really wish just that -3 articles on the Guardian in 2 days? I feel both privileged and bored of myself :o)

[Recommend?](#) (9)[Responses](#) (2)[Report](#)[Share](#)**phima**

18 November 2012 4:09PM

Response to [jeesuswhyme](#), 18 November 2012 3:40PM

From what you say and how you say it I suspect you are baffled because you haven't taken the time to actually read anything about a subject in which you presumably have at best a limited interest but still feel the need to enlighten us with your pearls...

I have to admit, that your assumptions are not far from the truth. I do not know a lot about the Catalan independence movement.

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I have followed the developments in Scotland for the past years though, even if only from a distance.

What leaves me baffled is not as much any particular case, but rather the prospect of ever more borders between ever smaller nations in Europe.

The countries of the western Balkan are an example, how fragmentation can lead to stagnation and diminishing economical prospects.

In regard to my pearls...

I admit to being rather vain a person, but even I am aware of my limited intellectual capacity.



**YetAnotherView**

18 November 2012 4:12PM

Spanish people are lucky that Artur Mas is such a loony. The Spanish political system is so rotten that independence sounds as good here as leaving the UE for British. However it doesn't take too long to realize that the Catalan political system is as rotten as the national one. I wish they make them "default" soon.

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**ishotthemosso**

18 November 2012 4:17PM

Response to [Dreikaiserbund](#), 18 November 2012 1:31PM

A Metroscopia poll today makes interesting reading. it found that 46% of Catalans would vote for independence, 42% against. But when asked if it meant leaving the EU, 37% would vote Yes and 50% would vote No. The poll failed to ask what they would vote if independence meant Barça having to play in a Catalan league.

And today's LLiga Primera results:

Barcelona 19 Lleida 0

Barcelona B 12 Lleida B 1

Espanyol B 1 Espanyol 99

That concludes today's results.

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**cinema**

18 November 2012 4:18PM

Polls say that Mas´ party, ERC and Iniciativa will be majority in Catalonia, and they want to celebrate a referendum about independence from Spain. Martin Roberts: dont´ write about "considerable autonomy", the catalan people want a state, ok?.

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**ishotthemosso**

18 November 2012 4:19PM

Response to [owell](#), 18 November 2012 1:45PM

Barca fans wouldn't mind playing in the Catalan league if that meant they could focus on competing in the Champions League.

It would massively weaken them, look at the deterioration of the quality of the Dutch sides, and they play in a far more populous country with far more competetive well-supported teams.

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**Saloufest**

18 November 2012 4:20PM

Response to [Johanes](#), 18 November 2012 3:47PM

A little bit of respect for *that stupid waiter in Fawlty Towers*, please! What a heart he had!

*'l'avara poverta' di Catalogna*

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18 November 2012 4:24PM

Response to [cinema](#), 18 November 2012 4:18PM

Polls say that Mas´ party, ERC and Iniciativa will be majority in Catalonia, and they want to celebrate a referendum about independence from Spain. Martin Roberts: dont´ write about "considerable autonomy", the catalan people want a state, ok?.

Today and for the first time ever, Catalans tell pollsters that they want independence. What bothers me about this is that for all but the last year a referendum would have been lost, why should the fact it might not be now be the definitive deciding point, 110 years against and one year for, yet the only decision that counts is now? A bit of a problem in terms of fairness and democracy.

I favour two referendums, 10 years apart, to show that what Catalonia genuinely wants is independence, rather than this just being a temporary hissy fit due to the economic crisis.

[Recommend? \(3\)](#)[Responses \(2\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)**amuntvalencia**

18 November 2012 4:44PM

Response to [pirro23](#), 18 November 2012 3:58PM

Not worried in the slightest. You seem to have confused opinion with concern.

Thanks for your kind words though.

[Recommend? \(1\)](#)[Responses \(0\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)**smithsdream**

18 November 2012 4:46PM

This is poor journalism, failing to mention that CIU and its leader Artur Mas are only one of several Catalan parties (of both left and right) in favour of a referendum on independence and in favour of independence itself. All the polls suggest that after the elections on Nov 25 there will be a very clear majority in favour in the Catalan parliament, on both of these questions.

The transversal spread of pro-independence feeling in Catalonia is both its strength and its weakness. A strength in that it reflects the deep roots of the sentiment in many different sectors of Catalan society, a weakness in that these parties of a possible pro-independence coalition are vigorously opposed on other issues and policies. Suffice to say that the picture painted in this Guardian article is a little simplistic, and, as stated, in some cases actually wrong.

[Recommend? \(52\)](#)[Responses \(0\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)**CWB304**

18 November 2012 4:47PM

[Recommend? \(5\)](#)[Responses \(0\)](#)

Response to [robrut1](#), 18 November 2012 3:07PM

By the way, I would vote no to independence. But, yes to the referendum. It would be a grave mistake for the Catalans to detach themselves from Spain at this moment, with all this economic crisis in the EU. Look at what just took place in Cadiz! Spain and Latin America, a region that continues to grow steadily, have launched a new era of cooperation. This will result in much economic prosperity for the people of both sides of the Atlantic. A united Spain can benefit the most out of this new alliance.

Your propaganda skills are required by some rather nasty regimes in the Middle East!

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18 November 2012 4:52PM

Response to [helenacr32](#), 18 November 2012 4:04PM

I would certainly defer to any scientific or knowledgeable analysis rather than my own opinion on this.

Can't help thinking though that sometimes the independence debate clouds the reality. What is certain is that an independent Catalunya will not mean life continues the same but with a Catalan passport for Catalunyan. Independence may give autonomy, but doesn't automatically equate to a better situation for everyone.

Of course, it is easy for me to opine from the comfort of my sofa in leafy Surrey about things that don't directly affect me, but sometimes what you have is better than the change that you wish for.....

[Recommend? \(1\)](#)[Responses \(0\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)**thelonggrass**

18 November 2012 4:54PM

Response to [phima](#), 18 November 2012 4:09PM

What leaves me baffled is not as much any particular case, but rather the prospect of ever more borders between ever smaller nations in Europe.

With the exception of Britain/England and France, which both have been 'large' countries for a long time, most of Europe has historically been divided into smaller territories than we have now, albeit complicated by the ebbing and flowing of the largely German Holy Roman (and Habsburgs) empire. The modern state of Germany really only formed in 1871 and that of Italy only in about 1861 for instance so 'big' nations are relatively modern ideas.

There's also a question of whether countries can be too big. The bigger the country the more difficult it is to balance the competing claims of different regions or parts. England has the perennial North vs South argument (or London versus everywhere else) for instance. The solution to the problem is normally attempted to be resolved through formal legal federalism but this still might not resolve historical tensions between the centre and the peripheries (eg between Paris and Corsica, or between Sicily and the Italian mainland for instance). These tensions tend to be amplified at times of economic stress.

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And if you look at the sizes of countries in the EU most have populations of 16m or fewer. Only France, Germany, Spain, Italy, UK and Poland are larger. Catalonia would actually be a fair-sized country by European standards - larger by population than Norway, Ireland or Finland for instance and in about the same size band as Switzerland, Austria, Sweden or Belgium.

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