

Catalan independence

I am of course neutral over the issue of whether Catalonia should be independent or remain part of Spain. It does not help for outsiders to express voting preferences before elections or referendums in other countries.

I did, however, find the BBC coverage of the Catalan election amusingly inaccurate. Before the poll they were running the Spanish government line that people were switching to parties that wanted Catalonia to stay in Spain, in response to the economic Project Fear campaign that the Spanish government were pursuing. Now we know the result, nothing of the sort was happening. I loved the irony. The BBC was busily giving credence to the views of the Partido Popular (a right of centre party it is alleged) that leads the Madrid government and has followed a thuggish policy of trying to suppress enthusiasm for devolved government and independence within Catalonia. That self same Partido Popular itself slumped from 11 seats to just 3 seats in the 135 seat Parliament”!

The one view I do hold is these matters of identity and democratic accountability are best settled by democratic means. If Spain had let Catalonia have a referendum to decide the issue the public may well have voted to stay with Spain, as Scotland did when we rightly offered them the choice. Instead, the unpleasant ways used to try to extinguish nationalist feeling has ensured the independence parties won this latest election. The EU, which used to encourage regional identity and regional political movements now seems ashamed of what it has helped unleash and will not speak out for a democratic way of resolving the tensions.