

Catalan independence

The Spanish state refuses to allow the Catalans a vote on whether they wish to be independent of Spain. The elected Catalan government is preparing for a referendum at the beginning of October to decide whether to stay or go. The Madrid government argues this is against the Spanish constitution and refuse to sanction such a vote. Polls suggest the independence side is a little behind.

The Spanish state is now arresting and bringing charges against Catalan politicians who are preparing this vote. They are seizing ballot papers, and withdrawing powers and money from the Catalan government to stop the vote taking place.

The EU in its earlier days encouraged regional governments and often appealed over the heads of national governments to them. It created a Committee of the Regions and prefers to run various programmes by sending cash direct to regional administrations. Now it is more nervous of the centrifugal pull of regions, and keener to help member states that face disruptive regions.

The heavy handed approach of the Spanish state may be making more Catalans favour independence. It is strange to see a western democracy going to such lengths to stop a vote which an elected regional government wants. When Scotland wanted something similar the UK state granted it. Its not something to do too often, but when there is a strong head of steam behind such an issue and no vote has taken place for a long time it is a pity opinion can be thwarted. The EU once again backs the anti democratic forces.