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Spanish State/Catalonia

Some quick notes on the outcome of the Catalan elections

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1. The big loser in the snap regional elections held in Catalonia on December 21, 2017 is the Spanish prime minister, Mariano Rajoy. He dismissed the democratically elected Catalan government and dissolved the parliament through Article 155, then convened an election to destroy the pro-independence majority and strengthen his position. He didn't succeed in either goal.

Pro-independence parties maintain (with a loss of two seats) an absolute majority and support for Rajoy's party, the Partido Popular (PP), has crashed, leaving it as a residual force on the verge of losing its parliamentary representation. It seems that the decline of the PP may be starting because it now has real competition in its own camp.

2. The pro-independence camp has been rearranged but with little overall difference in votes and seats. It remains solid and has not been deterred by Article 155, police deployment or imprisonment. But the right of that camp has gained ground from the left, especially the CUP (Candidatura d'Unitat Popular), which lost half of its votes and 60% of its seats. The CUP is an admirable organization in many ways, but from almost the beginning it has played the role of the little brother of the process, without any orientation towards left sectors which are not pro-independence. This work of providing an inter-class bridge above the camps (even though the independence camp is recognized as hegemonic) is, I believe, at the origin of the poor result of the lefts. The ERC (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya) has demonstrated a lack of boldness and in general its leaders have appeared as people of a low political level. The opposite is true of the party of the Catalan nationalist right, the convergence now called Junts X Catalunya, which has found in Puigdemont a shrewd politician who has managed to overcome a very difficult starting position for his PDeCAT (Partit Democràtic Europeu Català). The future of the process is uncertain. But imprisoned or not, it seems clear that Puigdemont will again be the president of Catalonia. It is a pity that the right has kept the leadership of this camp but in any case, it is not comparable in any way to the other right on the unionist side.

3. Ciudadanos swept the board in the unionist camp, absorbing the PP vote almost completely but biting into the left-wing electorate, above all in Barcelona's industrial belt. It is alarming that a 100% neoliberal party, further to the right than the PP on some issues, can attract so many working-class votes. The absence of the left in many working-class neighbourhoods is a factor but also the pro-independence movement, particularly its most left-wing component, has not been able to connect with these people, who channel their rage into a national rather than a social key. Its leader, Albert Rivera, can have a privileged springboard here for his leap to the rest of the Spanish state. A dizzying thought. The PSC (Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya) remained almost at the same level, lowering the unfounded expectations placed on its candidate, Miquel Iceta. PSOE leader Pedro Sanchez didn't win anything today, but didn't lose either.

4. As for los Comunes and Podemos, the result was bad, though there were no expectations of much more. But the cold data say that Catalunya en Comú (CeC) drew 84% of its votes in the province of Barcelona but only 9.5 % in the capital, Barcelona, where they have the mayor, Ada Colau. The CQSP (Catalunya Sí- que es Pot – the Podemos-inspired coalition in the last regional elections) result was already disappointing but this was worse, despite the fact that the candidate and the campaign were better. Here the errors of permanent equidistance and the lack of preparation for the referendum on October 1st and subsequent demonstrations have weighed heavily. Also, the quasi-dissolution of Podem by administrative means. For a left-wing force, being a spectator at the biggest popular mobilization process in years doesn't seem like a good recipe for more support. Now CeC should think about how to build an organic reference that can actually be implanted. But the risk of being a surrogate for ICV (Iniciativa de Catalunya) remains high. At the state level, we hope that there will be no backsliding in the defence of the referendum for Catalonia, which after this 21-D continues to appear as the only possible solution to the Catalan

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