

Spanish State: Right sweeps Madrid, left must rethink

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The Partido Popular (PP) led by Isabel Díaz Ayuso, one of the leaders of the party's right wing, easily won the elections held on 4 May 2021 in the Community of Madrid.

The party now has 65 deputies as opposed to 30 previously and will be able to rule the region alone with support when needed from the far right Vox party. It was a bad day for all left-wing people, who have suffered from the corruption and Trumpism of this radical right. Its infamous management of the pandemic worked to its benefit because it linked the open-door policy of hospitality and other activities with the concept of freedom. This allowed it to regroup much of the right-wing electorate but also mobilize traditional, low-politicized abstentionists.

There is no other explanation for Ayuso's victory in virtually all the municipalities of the Community of Madrid with significant rises in the traditional bastions of the left that have not been the result only of vote transfers from the other right wing parties or the PSOE.

There will be time to analyse the root causes of Ayuso's sweeping victory and how the bloc on the right has been strengthened because Vox also increased its vote from 2019 (going from 12 to 13 seats). With 76% participation (the highest in electoral history in this region) it is obvious that the support bases for the right are robust and have been cemented with care over 26 years leading the government. Confronting them only in parliament or during election campaigns is not enough. They need to be fought with alternative social organization and political proposals that will be at the root of the reproduction of their power. That is, fighting for the extension of the public network in education and health and for the dismantling of subsidised private education and private health, or for a model of residences of 100% public nursing homes. Also, an urban policy radically different from the current one, which produces isolated and anomic cities and in which the difference between right and left is indistinguishable. They look like utopian slogans these days. But if we don't approach them seriously from the left, we'll never get lasting change in this community.

The PSOE sank miserably, reaping the fruits of a terrible campaign by an exhausted candidate who did not want to be there and a central government whose social measures have been less than insufficient. Despite the propaganda, the social shield is not perceived by the working classes as a protection worthy of the crisis caused by the pandemic. The failure of Sanchez and his all-powerful advisor Redondo is obvious and could lead to changes (for the worse) at national level, in the form of even greater moderation in economic policy and the increasing isolation of Unidas Podemos.

The left wing Más Madrid slate recorded a very good result, overtaking the PSOE, the result of good opposition work, a good campaign and a health worker candidate who benefited from the general gratitude for their work during this pandemic. It has also benefited from not being in the central government, with the erosion that afflicted the two coalition partners in the form of unfulfilled expectations (remember that the PP's employment reform, the Mordaza Law, has not been repealed, there has been no tax reform, and the price of rents has not been regulated).

Unidas Podemos recorded a slight advance from 2019 but did not achieve the goal of stopping the advance of the right with the presence of Pablo Iglesias at the head of its list. Following these results, Iglesias has resigned from all his posts. We will see whether there is any reorientation among those staying in UP or even deepened support for widespread pacts with the PSOE. The designated successor to Iglesias, Yolanda Díaz, bases her current prestige on a policy of social concertation with employers and trade unions from the Ministry of Labour. This policy could enter into crisis soon as thousands of layoffs are announced in companies of all kinds and it does not appear that the PSOE will turn to an employment policy more favourable to the interests of workers. What is evident is that UP's presence in the national government adds nothing to its appeal and in every election they fall back or barely hold what they had and, despite their activist campaign and a candidacy with a good handful of references from social movements, they scored well below Más Madrid, which even achieved Pablo Iglesias' old goal of overtaking the PSOE.

Ciudadanos have disappeared from the Madrid Assembly and, very soon, will be gone from everywhere. A washed-up party whose only interest is knowing how long it will take those in governments with the PP to move to that party. The political centre in the Spanish state is an empty space.

But disappointment with these results should not prevent the left from continuing to fight against the neoliberalism that will be administered in Madrid. Anticapitalistas will build a broad social front against this strengthened right and find ways for an opposition not confined to parliament. Tough times are coming, but it is up to us to build a broad social front against this strengthened right with a horizon of profound social transformation and to recover the spaces of socialization hit so much by the pandemic. We will get down to that task right away. Sooner rather than later, we'll move the tab again.

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P.S.

• IVP. Saturday 8 May 2021:
<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7134>

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