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## IN SPAIN WINS UNCERTAINTY

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*The electoral results of December 20th have led to uncertainty, for Spain, in the possibility of having a four-year legislature. Below, retracing the political debate that was the backdrop for presidential elections, we will highlight the shortcomings of the features of Spanish electoral system and reveal the fragmented political landscape of the country.*

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On 20th, in Spain presidential elections were held. After weeks of heated debates on television and a massive campaign conducted by the four duelists, ballot boxes presented the ungovernability of the country, showing that the social divide created by the crisis of recent years is far from healed and that the promises made by the traditional parties have serious issues of credibility after the corruption scandals which plagued the two main political forces in the Iberian country.

In the field there were four predominant political forces, in addition to the traditional **PP** (Popular Party) which was ruling the country for four years with the Prime Minister **Mariano Rajoy** and the **PSOE** (Spanish Socialist Workers Party) that candidated the newly elected Secretary **Pedro Sanchez**. Since the pre-election polls, this election had marked the end of Spanish bipolarity, with two new overflowing forces, **Podemos** (We can) led by the histrionic **Pablo Iglesias** and **Ciudadanos** (Citizens) guided by the young catalan **Albert Rivera**.

The elections had arrived in a poisoned climate and the main mean of communication was the debate face to face: if hot topics like social inequality, insecurity, youth unemployment, independence and a horrible electoral law were not sufficient to fuel the debate, then corruption was the fuse to see fiery threads accusations and unseemliness in the interventions of participants.

The communications strategies proved to be fundamental: Prime Minister **Rajoy** refused several invitations to four debates organized by private media, sending in his place on one occasion the vice-Prime Minister Soraya Saenz de Santamaria, and then participated in the debate at two against Pedro Sanchez organized by the public television **RTVE**, defending his personal integrity from **corruption charges** and his governamental work that, despite having experienced very hard times, closes the legislature with a **growth of 3% of GDP**.

Rajoy's main rival, the Socialist **Sanchez**, tried to gore his opponent with accusations of incompetence and bad faith and took up the cudgels for defending the actions of previous socialist governments of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and his party. And the actual defeater of this election, it seemed overzealous in wanting to hit the target that he had set, not understanding that the true opponent of this election campaign was **Iglesias**. In fact, *Podemos* leader, despite programs and populist ideas, typical of the party, seems to be conscient about the idea to not govern. So he could promise the moon and other stars to his constituents. He acted in cold blood in the political programming, focusing on proposals and not on allegations; he did not antagonized the base of the PSOE and in particular, he seemed more moderate than his Socialist rival. He is the real winner of the elections.

At last, **Albert Rivera** represents the absolute novelty in the European scene. Proud young Catalan who has gained credibility from opposition to the independent Arthur Mas i Gavarro in the homeland, he represent the true novelty, against the European populist parties. His program was simple: labor reform, with the establishment of the single contract, electoral law reform, fight against corruption, administrative simplification, reform of justice, no independence for the Catalan compatriots and “more Europe” for Spain. But, despite the great job of his staff during the election campaign, he appeared too nervous and anxious in the debates on the screen, reminding to the Spanish, what the previous parties have done, betraying the expectations of the polls, which saw him at that moment above the PSOE as a second power in the country.

The elections have had a significant turnout, **73.2%** of those eligible voted, as much as **6.2%** more than in 2011. The first party in the country remains the **PP** with **28.72%** of the votes and **123** deputies out of 350 to be assigned (lost 33.6% of votes, and as many as 63 deputies), according to the **PSOE** with **22.01%** and **90** seats in Parliament (lose 21% of the vote and 20 deputies). **Podemos** won the preference of **20.66%** of the votes and **69** deputies while **Ciudadanos** got **13,93%** of votes and **40** seats.

If these elections may be called cryptic for the future of the legislature, by failing to define a majority, they have made clear many issues that the next government will be forced to face. The profound injustice and inefficiency of the election law will be discussed in order to be able to form a government. Podemos and Ciudadanos have already agreed **to change the current proportional D'Hondt system**, which assigns two parliamentarians to each of the 50 provinces and one to those of Ceuta and Melilla, the remaining 248 seats are allocated in proportion to the population. This system is only representative in the larger provinces, and favours large parties making the vote of small provinces more influential and useless the vote for small parties. To the date, a Spanish citizen may not see his/her vote cast in Parliament if he/she comes from a small province.

What is certain now is that Prime Minister Rajoy will not have an easy time to form a government. The only party to have given precise details of how it will behave is Ciudadanos, who has already announced that it will not vote against any minority government, unless this is not Podemos, which had promised a referendum for nationalists. This fact may suggest an "external support" to the populists of Rajoy. Podemos has already showed willingness to make an effort to seek an understanding with the socialists. The PSOE will not form a government of national unity as in Germany or Italy, at least it is what it claims, even if the solution is the most plausible and desirable, for having a short term legislature that could redefine the widely shared electoral rules.

The strangeness of this election is the compliment that *El Pais* did to Italy, recognizing that in its eternal ungovernability has always managed to find a strange political balance or, as the Spanish say, "Machiavellian", although, failing to grasp that no legislature in Italian history has remained in office for the planned five-year period and that the coalitions led to a stagnation in the reforms that only with this last government seems to have faded. Hopefully, Spain is not really envious of the Italian situation, and soon will find its right formula for governability.

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