

Spain in election limbo after right-wing Popular Party and far-right Vox fail to secure majority to govern

Alejandro López
24 July 2023

The right-wing Popular Party (PP) and neo-fascist Vox have failed to win an absolute majority in yesterday's national election. As Monday approached, the PP and Vox had secured 169 seats, seven short of an overall majority, to the Socialist Party (PSOE) and Sumar's 153.

PP leader Alberto Nunez Feijoo has said he would try to form a government, but his potential bloc of support would only win 170 seats to the PSOE-led bloc's 172. This suggests weeks of haggling before a possible renewal of a minority Socialist Party (PSOE) - Sumar government, backed by nationalist and regionalist parties.

The PP went from 5 million votes and 89 seats in 2019 to 8 million (33 percent of the vote) and 136 seats. It went up 47 seats largely by consolidating the right-wing vote at the expense of the now collapsed Citizens but also Vox, whose vote declined from 3.6 million in 2019 and 52 seats to 2.8 million (12 percent of the vote) and 33 seats. In all essentials, however, Vox' neo-fascist programme is shared by the PP from which it emerged, and which shies away from Vox's more extreme rhetoric only to lend a veneer of respectability to its class war and militarist agenda.

The main electoral shift was an increased vote among workers and young people set on blocking Vox from entering government, the first time an avowedly Francoist party would have done so since the fall of the dictatorship and the "transition to democracy" in 1978. Turnout increased 4 percent, from 66 percent in 2019 to 70 percent yesterday—the highest participation in 15 years.

Despite its savage austerity and pro-war measures in the past four years, the PSOE, led by acting Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez was the main beneficiary, rising from 6.8 million votes and 120 seats in 2019 to 7.7 million (31 percent of the vote) and 122 seats.

Significantly, the largest transfer of votes to the PSOE

came from Catalonia and the Basque Country, at the expense of the separatist parties, as well as from voters.

Sumar, an electoral platform of 15 parties, includes the massively discredited pseudo-left Podemos, led by acting Deputy Prime Minister and Labour Minister Yolanda Díaz, won 31 seats from 2.9 million votes (12 percent of the vote). This is a loss of half a million votes compared with the 38 seats and 3.4 million votes won by these parties when standing as Unidas-Podemos in 2019—confirming the party's downward spiral after four years of pro-war, pro-austerity measures in office.

Such is the unpopularity of Sumar that its leader Díaz had to suspend its rally in Cádiz after metalworkers broke in and jeered her down.

With a collective 153 seats, the PSOE and Sumar will require the support of nationalists and regionalist parties to secure an overall majority of 176. This includes the seven seats of Together for Catalonia, led by exiled former Catalan regional premier and Member of the European Parliament Carles Puigdemont who has become an electoral kingmaker.

Puigdemont and other members of the Catalan government were charged on October 30, 2017, with rebellion, sedition and misuse of public funds for calling a referendum and then declaring independence. Puigdemont fled to Belgium. Earlier this month, he was stripped of his immunity as a member of the European parliament by the European Union's General Court of Justice. He is now waiting for Spain's Supreme Court to issue a new European Arrest Warrant on reduced charges.

The media is filled with speculation over what the separatist parties will demand of the PSOE for renewing their previous support, including a legally sanctioned referendum—though this is unlikely given their declining support. The right-wing press has initiated a ferocious

campaign about Sanchez only being able to rule by “breaking Spain’s unity”, while Vox leader Santiago Abascal rails against a government “invested with the support of communism” and “the coup-seeking separatism and terrorism”.

There could now be a prolonged period of political paralysis and rising crisis. In 2019, it took three elections before the PSOE and Podemos agreed to form Spain’s first coalition government.

The elections have resolved none of the fundamental political issues facing workers and youth. A PSOE-Sumar government will not stop the growing danger represented by the political heirs of the fascist general Francisco Franco. Rather, the result will be used to blackmail workers into uniting behind Sánchez to try and stifle a movement to the left that has seen an eruption of struggles against his outgoing government’s pro-war and austerity policies.

Preventing the working class from intervening independently and in its own interests was the main aim of the election strategy of the PSOE and Sumar. None of the major issues confronting the working class—Spain’s participation in NATO’s war against Russia in Ukraine, deteriorating social conditions in a cost-of-living crisis provoked by low wages, soaring prices and high costs of rents and mortgages, or the escalating attacks on democratic rights—were discussed. Instead, the campaign was dominated by appeals to abandon all past criticism and not allow the PP and Vox into government.

Celebrating from the PSOE’s headquarters yesterday, Sánchez cynically declared that the defeat of the “regressive block” had prevented “a total repeal of all the progress we have made in the last four years.”

“Unity against fascism” will continue to be used as a weapon against the working class, as a PSOE-Sumar government continues with policies that for the past four years have centred on supporting Spain’s participation in the NATO war against Russia, slashing pensions and wages while massively hiking the military budget and bailouts for major banks and corporations and pursuing a profits-over-lives policy in the COVID-19 pandemic.

When metalworkers went on strike in Galicia this month demanding wages above inflation, the acting government sent hundreds of anti-riot police to crush their strike using batons, rubber bullets and teargas. Against striking aircrew, it imposed draconian anti-strike minimum services.

The PSOE-Podemos has also escalated its war efforts over the past months. Sánchez travelled to Kiev and

promised the EU’s support for Ukraine “regardless of the price that has to be paid”. He joined NATO’s Vilnius Summit, promising Spain would deploy 700 troops in Slovakia for the first time and reinforce its presence in Romania by 250 troops to strengthen NATO’s encirclement of Russia. There was not one interview where Díaz, or her number two, Agustín Santos, failed to proclaim their own support for Ukraine’s “right to defend itself” against “Putin’s illegal war”.

Their government also allowed 37 refugees to drown off the coast of the Canary Islands in line with the European Union’s “let them drown” policy.

Even in the 56 days since calling the snap elections after the electoral debacle in May’s local and regional elections, the interim government sent a letter to the European Union committing to €24 billion in cuts and tax increases next year.

Any PSOE-Sumar government would assume power amid the largest strike wave across Europe since the 1970s, as Spain and the NATO alliance continue to wage war against Russia in Ukraine and mount constant provocations against China. An explosive growth of inflation is bringing class tensions to boiling point. The PSOE and Sumar, articulating the interests of the affluent middle class, will move further to the right and respond with police state measures.

The solution to the mounting crisis of capitalism will not be found in the Spanish parliament, or in the maneuvers of Sumar, Podemos, the Stalinists and the trade union bureaucracy, but in the global class struggle. The way forward, as the WSWS wrote in Saturday’s perspective, is to argue within this developing movement for the necessity of building sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Spain and internationally, uniting the international working class in a movement opposing imperialist war and fighting for a socialist transfer of state power.



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