

VOX IS AFRAID, AND SO IS THE ELECTORATE: REFLECTIONS ON THE ANDALUSIAN ELECTION

Posted on July 7, 2022



In Andalusia, VOX was not really working to expand

its electorate. It simply reinforced its existing messaging, retained its basic brand, and preserved its core voter base. In this way, it hoped to secure a coalition with the PP and avoid “stealing” too many votes, which might have divided the Right in parliament.

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Confused Signaling

VOX has been sending mixed signals.

In assessing the result of the [recent elections](#) in Spain’s southern region of Andalusia, party representatives have described the center-right People’s Party’s (PP) victory and ability to govern on its own (i.e. without VOX) as “good for Spain.” For its part, VOX increased its voter base, but performed a lot worse than expected.

As VOX party leader Santiago Abascal [said](#) (my translation):

We never interpret electoral results in an exclusively partisan key. We would have wanted better results for VOX, but these are good results for Spain and, therefore, they are good for VOX. VOX has always been an instrument at the service of Spain.

Such decorum might seem fitting. On the one hand, the strong showing of the PP keeps the Left out of a regional assembly it had dominated for decades, while also hurting the country's ruling, socialist-led coalition.

On the other hand, however, and more honestly, VOX representatives, including the leader of the Andalusian campaign herself, Macarena Olona, have admitted that they do not think the PP is trustworthy, and that knowing the PP will be governing without VOX is, in fact, a blow.

Indeed, VOX cannot coherently characterize a party like the PP in terms of that party's commitment to a host of initiatives VOX rejects, like the [Agenda 2030](#), and also describe the center-right's victories as "good for Spain." If the point is that the PP happens to be "the lesser of two evils," surely being *lesser* also makes it more *palatable*, and so not really lesser after all, but more insidious.

Politics as Usual

None of this should come as a revelation. We are, by now, well acquainted with the oscillations of power: empty leftist promises to the working and middle classes result in a four or eight-year long onslaught of education-reforming, financially-draining period of [social engineering](#), so that the electorate begins to crave economically sound (or just less harmful) center-right government. The latter, of course, does nothing to reverse the legislative aberrations of its predecessors. The Left 'liberalizes' social norms (enshrining this 'progress' in law), and the Right 'liberalizes' the economy (in ways that temporarily replenish the country's coffers, but mostly benefit international corporations).

Being aware of this dialectical game, a party like VOX should not pretend that the rise of the People's Party, coming at the tail-end of Spain's ongoingly disastrous socialist-led government, is a good sign. It is simply the perfectly predictable phase of a long-standing two-pronged dynamic at which we happen to find ourselves.

It could hardly be more obvious that the People's Party offers what it has always offered. It will manage the economy such that the treasury is replenished, and the books recover from the Left's spending frenzy. But it will leave the legislative outrages of the Left more or less in place.

As for the culture war, mainstream parties can engage with red-meat issues in inefficacious, dialectic-reinforcing ways: for example, by opposing abortion while failing to address socio-economic pressures that lead to abortion (like the breakdown of community-life that makes it hard for a single mother to take care of her child) and without supporting the kind of welfare that would allow a single mother to take care of her child, or at least facilitating adoption.

The political Right's 'conservatism' thus often comes down to flagship causes without a corresponding, holistic project to regenerate the social fabric that would support these causes.

Indeed, its ideological commitment to the liberal idea that the individual's pursuit of economic self-interest results in general prosperity, and that this kind of prosperity is somehow equivalent to collective virtue, precisely serves to continue degrading social solidarity. This plays into the progressive talking point that social conservatives care about human life at the beginning (during pregnancy) and at the end (opposing euthanasia) of life, but not in between. Cultural warfare thereby remains socially-divisive, rather than transformative. This is more or less how it is conducted in the U.S.

Things are generally different in Europe. The People's Party, for instance, does not champion the right to life or bring up issues around abortion and gay marriage the way an American Republican candidate might. But it does engage in just enough empty gestures to make those without the time to follow politics too closely think that it might actually change existing laws when it enters government.

For example, the PP has traditionally sent representatives to pro-life demonstrations. The

party's leader, Alberto Feijóo, however, has said he will not be repealing laws around abortion, because those sorts of issues “help VOX” and shift the PP away from the political center.

It should be quite clear, then, that a parliament without VOX emboldens the PP's agenda, which is—quite straightforwardly—one of going along with the Left on substantive issues.

VOX's Macarena Olona provided a lucid assessment of the situation during an interview in which she highlighted the degree to which VOX must now rely on the PP's discretion:

Voters have given the PP a blank cheque ... VOX will be vigilant so that the faith voters have given the PP is not betrayed ... We will now see what attitude Mr. Juanma Moreno and his party bring to the [Andalusian] chamber. For example, the first decision that needs to be taken concerns the constitution of the parliamentary table. Proportionately, we would be entitled to a vice-president. But that doesn't mean the PP cannot give us another chair in the Andalusian parliament ... as a matter of parliamentary courtesy, if you will, owed to those [VOX] who allowed them [the PP] to form a government and preside over the previous Andalusian legislature [in which the PP did not enjoy an absolute majority]. We are their natural partners.

Despite talk of vigilance, and describing the PP as a “natural partner,” the substance of her remarks make it clear that results like those of the Andalusian elections leave VOX, or rather, the electorate, at the mercy, so to speak, of a party that has shown itself not to be trustworthy.

Andalusia: Campaigning for Junior Status

Relative media blackouts and negative coverage aside, I am not a fan of the VOX campaign in Andalusia. It is probably true that it was less active, featuring less in-person visits to different municipalities, than it should have been, as well as lacking a strong enough emphasis on the talking point that propelled VOX forward in Castilla y Leon: the issue of needing to make village-life and life in the countryside more viable for young people.

VOX limited itself to national-level, general, on-brand topics. The campaign was also marred by a certain theatrical character, including the use of folkloric dresses and Olona's overly dramatic tone during the first debate, which Andalusians clearly did not take to.

Olona also needed to be flanked by more high-profile people and low-profile experts. VOX needs to recruit more and better—it needs to be able to present projects that deliver on its program in a convincing way, articulated by people trained in the relevant fields. There are likely voters who simply don't see VOX as a party able to implement its policies.

The above gave the campaign an air of *faux*-radicalism. Whether consciously or not, much of the electorate probably picked up on this. As always, VOX appeared to represent a break with politics as usual, and indeed, much of its platform does just this. However, the party was clearly aiming to ensure a coalition with the PP, and trying not to 'steal' too many votes. VOX was not really working to expand its electorate. It simply reinforced its existing messaging, retaining its character and preserving its core voter base, without addressing regional idiosyncrasies too much, which might have appealed to voters who are swayed by specific policies.

True, during the debates, Olona did ask the PP candidate, Juanma Moreno, if he would accept the position of vice-president under her, and she asked voters not to opt for the "less bad option," referring to the PP. Rhetorical flurries aside, however, it seems VOX has been afraid of getting too many votes, because maximizing its support and mobilizing as much of the electorate as possible might result in a divided Right, which would enable the Left to cobble together a coalition, as it has been doing at the national level. VOX thus allowed the PP to absorb disaffected *Ciudadanos* (the party of flavorless centrism) and socialist voters, while itself failing to galvanize the support many expected.

Of course, politics has its rhythms, and the PP's absolute majority is also the result of the electorate understandably reacting to a leftist coalition that includes unrepentant ETA terrorists and a plummeting quality of life by going with the safest vote: what seems to be the quickest and surest path to get Spain out of its current quagmire. It may also be that voters remember a different Spain, whose prosperity they identify with past PP administrations.

By characterizing PP's victories as good for Spain, however, VOX helps reinforce this notion, which is bad for the country insofar as it is *false*. The PP will not (or cannot) go back on those social and global agendas to which it has subscribed and which require that certain social-engineering and geopolitically-compromised measures be taken.

An Establishment Victory

Very tellingly, acquiescence to the PP is now also popular on the Left, who are using the party to justify its own disunity in Andalusia. They rightly point out that, had the Left presented a single front, it would have gained more seats in that region's parliament, hurting the center-right and so forcing the PP to include VOX in a coalition.

The Left consisted of the local socialist party and two candidates from the radical or postmodern Left: *Por Andalucía* and *Adelante Andalucía*. The spectacle of leftist commentators celebrating a center-right absolute majority is more or less unprecedented in Spanish politics, paralleling the rehabilitation of George Bush Jr. in the U.S. by way of contrast with Trump. [Tweeted](#) Antonio Maestre, a high-profile journalist often billed as an "expert on fascism" (my translation):

If Por Andalucía and Adelante Andalucía had unified, they would have won vital seats that would have left the PP without an absolute majority and, therefore, dependent on VOX [to govern].

The paradox is that [the Left's] disunity and utter failure has resulted in the greatest anti-fascist milestone it could have delivered.

The Left seems to recognise itself to be one half of a political oscillation, a cloven hoof, and is celebrating the victory of the other prong and the exclusion of what might have been a disruptive third party (VOX). Of course, this sort of rhetoric is sold as a response to the imminent danger posed by fascistic parties: urgency and permanent-emergency is precisely the means through which such conformity is ensured.

Crucially, the hyperbolic definition of “fascist” changes, depending on convenience: the PP used to be anathema, because there was nothing to its right. The postmodern Left's periodic *admissions of allegiance to a system and political dynamic that spans across party-lines* should not be ignored.

The Path to Irrelevancy

Some will see VOX's alignment with the People's Party as a sign of statesmanship; not fear, but prudence: a clear signal that the party is more concerned with freeing Spain from the current leftist coalition (and avoiding such coalitions at the regional level) than it is with doing as well as possible.

But realignments don't happen every election. If the orphaned, former-voters of collapsing parties (Ciudadanos, the Socialists, even Podemos, and, we might have thought, the People's Party) don't come to VOX—finding a home elsewhere—they may stay there for the foreseeable future.

VOX may still be needed as a junior party in regional and national coalitions. But that's where it will remain; that's where it will make its compromises; that's where it will lose its credibility as a force able to—or, more damning, *willing to*—lead a broader change in Spanish politics.

A large company can always undercut local competitors until they collapse, before raising its prices. The center-right knows it needs to imitate hardline conservatives (or populists, or whatever we decide to call parties like VOX) while the electorate remains frustrated with immigration, the attack on gender binaries and heteronormativity, the abolition of nationhood, and so on.

It may be more accurate to say that the center-right knows it needs to imitate these factions while the electorate *continues to believe* that something can be done about any of it: society eventually grows weary on account of the diffusion of its energies into political initiatives that go nowhere.

And this weariness begets cynicism: nothing makes a westerner feel smarter than the chance to say something cynical. Then society demobilizes, grows flaccid, retreats into merely personal—more specifically, merely *market*—choices: nothing makes a westerner feel empowered like declaring what he decided *not to buy*. (“Well, I’m sick of the wokesters. Didn’t go to see the latest cape-man movie. Take that Franchise™. I’m voting with my wallet these days.”)

The sense of urgency, or of there being a possibility to really change things, will fade. VOX will go the way of Podemos, a junior party to the center-left, and the People’s Party will return to unabashedly delivering on bloodless technocracy domestically, and resume fierce fealty to the global, center-right brand abroad.

The Path to Victory

Victory (not for VOX, or for any party, but for society) lies elsewhere.

To avoid irrelevancy, VOX needs to contrast itself with the center-right and continuously embrace non-dichotomous policies, fighting the “if it’s not Right, it’s Left” discourse. For

example, whenever it refers to the Right as cowardly (“la derecha cobarde”), as it often does, VOX should complement this by also referring to the Left as anti-worker (“la izquierda anti-obrera”), reiterating that the Left now prefers issues of gender-identity or Critical Race Theory to a traditional defense of the working class, and does little to resist the increased precariousness of the job market. If the Right is wantonly failing to stand up for its traditional values, the Left is just as wantonly failing to stand up for its own.

To be fair, the party leadership has begun to do something like this, as for example when Olona celebrated the legacy of the historic leftist Julio Anguita (albeit in terms I was unconvinced by, but the instinct was a good one). However—and just to drive the point home—this kind of transversal political positioning is lethally undercut by playing to the center-right and facilitating its victories.

Economically, between the Right’s emphasis on individual property and the Left’s state-ownership, a party like VOX should introduce the issue of rehabilitating the commons (village and neighborhood-owned land and resources) as well as promoting cooperatives and mutuality. (Incidentally, it entirely escapes me what manner of “conservatism” can be deserving of that name without championing the commons and the co-op.)

Politically, between the Right’s reactionary call for a general centralization (which is actually not all that common in Spain) and the Left’s accommodation of regional political elites, VOX should call for the traditional empowerment of municipal political participation, including by way of new technologies, while remembering that the municipality has been the bulwark against bourgeois, foreign-financed regional separatism. Jorge Buxade’s speech at CPAC this year hinted in this direction:

The community, the family, the municipality, the small piece of land where one was born and lives, are part of oneself, and that is why we will not allow it to be swept away by the cold wind of the globalist agenda.

And of course, VOX should continue to press the issue of road and internet connectivity for villages as a means to make life in the countryside more viable, getting young people to move out of the cities, have more children, and feel themselves to be custodians of folklore and tradition.

Anything that does not break the pendulum of modern politics—which is actually a dangling Diocletian sword—plays into it. Unfortunately, VOX has been playing to one side of that pendulum, albeit tentatively. Hopefully this doesn't become a habit.

The People's Party won't ultimately change its direction, and will continue advancing its side of the prevailing dialectic. As successive Spanish governments continue compromising on the country's geopolitical and economic interests, and as the PP fails to arrest harmful trends—such as the impact of gender ideology on the young and migration-related crime—voters will get the chance to reassess the “safe” center-right vote weighed against what VOX is offering. However, by then, the patriotic and anti-woke Left, which is already rising in some quarters, may have produced its own party-political brand, and VOX might have lost its “outsider” *bonafides*.