

## Spanish Politics Is US Geopolitics

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*The sun is hot in Spain this time of year. The Catholics too. Semana Santa (Holy Week) reminded us that Spain was once the world's preeminent source of religious fundamentalism. Today, in contrast, it simply copies the nihilistic fundamentalism which flows out of Wall Street. It now is the source of nothing and believes in nothing. For better or worse, Spain has been emasculated, neutralized and mediocritized. The proof are its politicians. And for the powers that be, that's just fine.*

On April 28 Spain is holding a general election. It will be the fourth since Spain's version of US capitalism began to implode at the end of 2008. Finance capital, and that hot sun, had created a property bubble the size of California. All of which turned into political crap, in 2012, when Spain had to submit to the same "economic medicine" which was crushing Greece at that precise moment - the Troika (the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund).

Ever since 2012 Spain has been drifting nowhere. The reason being that post-Franco democracy is moribund. Or maybe it was never alive to begin with.



Franco (right) had ruthlessly wiped out Spain's democrats a long time before his death in 1975. And after destroying them, he had imposed an unwanted king, and an unwanted alliance with the US military, upon the backs of the Spanish. And that was that.

Ever since the first post-Franco election, in 1977, these legacies of Spanish fascism have been hiding behind manufactured political parties: first the Union of the Democratic Centre (UCD) and then the Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and the Popular Party (PP).

This political cage, however, has been battered and discredited by the economic crisis that engulfed Spain after 2008. The solution to the financial crash, for the post-Franco establishment, has been obedience to the financial markets - the Troika. And disobedience to the people of Spain. The word - austerity - sums up this treasonous solution.

In response, the Spanish people came out onto the streets. In 2011 the 15-M (May 15)

Movement mobilized millions of ordinary Spaniards. Indignant about the naked appearance of financial fascism, the voiceless people took over the plazas of Spain. It was a 'Spanish Spring'. The streets of Madrid had picked up the vibe of the Mediterranean, that then was emanating from Tunis and Cairo. However, the Spanish government were picking up the vibe of the CIA. And sent the cops into the plazas - to crack heads. The powers that be didn't want freedom in the Mediterranean. Least of all in Spain.

And this geopolitical context is the key to understanding contemporary Spanish politics. Spain is a strategic gateway to many worlds: the Mediterranean, the European, the African and the Latin American. Because of its geographic location and history, Spain is a bridge. On the grand chessboard, Spain is more valuable than a pawn. And for this reason, Spain's fate is not in Spain's hands.

Franco knew this. During the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) he placed his fate not in the hands of the Spanish nation, but in the hands of Italian fascists, German Nazis and Moroccan mercenaries. And after World War Two, he instinctively turned to US imperialism. The once "great" Spain became a US colony.

"In 1953 Franco signed the Pact of Madrid.... The pact consisted of three separate, but interdependent, agreements between Spain and the United States. It provided for mutual defense, for military aid to Spain, and for the construction of bases there." (El País)

This innocuous looking agreement is the deep foundation of today's Spanish politics. Next to it, everything else is superficial - even the king and the banks and Catalonia. Franco's gift to Spain was nothing less than a pact with the devil. It was an agreement with permanent war. It was a fascist pact.

The pact manifested itself immediately. In the mid 1950s, the US built its own 'rock of Gibraltar' near the city of Cádiz: the naval port of Rota. And it moved into the airbase of Morón - near the city of Seville. From these extremely strategic positions the US could access Africa and the Mediterranean Sea within minutes. And it could reach the Middle East within a few hours.

Meanwhile, the secretive CIA teamed up with Franco's secretive state. So much so, that the great CIA whistleblower, Philip Agee, wrote in his account of 1970s Europe - 'On The Run': "The more they tried to get me to Spain, the more suspicious I was. I knew the Agency and the Franco services were as thick as thieves."

The death of Franco changed nothing. Spain's transition to 'democracy' was managed carefully - so as not to disturb US imperialism. In an important 1976 article, La CIA, Aquí, Ahora (in a Spanish magazine called Cambio 16), Spain's place in the Empire is brilliantly described:

"....neutrality in Spanish foreign policy... is the real danger for the USA...Washington's new strategic planning passes right through Spain, since the Iberian Peninsula is an extension of the African-Atlantic shelf. The Sahara, Angola, the independence movements in the Azores and Canaries, the Paris-Madrid-Rabat axis all form part of the same story....And it is no longer a matter of facing up to the Soviets, but [of blocking] the process of normalization in

international relations...

...With the handover of [Western Sahara] to Morocco, the [CIA] gained the isolation of Algeria, the division of the Third World, and the security of the monitoring units on Ceuta and Melilla and the base on Tenerife....

Already the Americans have secured the oil route that passes through Las Palmas and along the coast of Angola and the monitoring of the Soviet Mediterranean fleet from the south, thus reinforcing NATO's most vulnerable zone. And all of this would be put at risk if Spain were to become truly neutral.

...the United States would not be prepared to tolerate a Mediterranean Switzerland."

And is the 2019 relationship between Spain and the USA any different? No. Indeed recent events suggest it has become much darker.

A 2015 El País headline stated: "Spain to negotiate turning Morón into US base for anti-jihadist operations". While another El País headline that same year read: "US and Spain to sign deal making Morón main base for Africa operations".

And in April 2017 US navy ships - based in Rota, Spain - attacked Syria without informing the Spanish government beforehand. In fact, Spain's second class status, even within Spain, was underlined in February this year (2019) when the CIA brazenly broke into the Madrid embassy of North Korea and terrorized its occupants.

Will the Spanish government pushback? No. It continues to play the role the US has assigned for it. For example, when the US openly pressed for regime change in Venezuela last January, Spain's socialist Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, immediately supported the Americans. This being significant because Spain automatically leads official European opinion when it comes to Latin America.

So what's the point of the April 28 Spanish general election? Its ideological. Its a lie or a joke the Spanish state tells itself so as to cover up its own impotence. The Spanish people, however, are beginning to feel it.

The new left leaning political party, Podemos (We Can), emerged out of the 2011 'Spanish Spring' and has upset the established order. But it is fighting a rigged voting system that favors the conservative countryside - at the expense of the more critical 'Podemos cities'. And it is being shadowed now by two new 'made to measure' (CIA?) right wing parties: Ciudadanos (Citizens) and Vox (Voice).

As the US gears up today for a few more wars (Iran and Venezuela) there seems to be no escape, for Spain, from its deep colonial status. Even Podemos don't seem to be aware of the depth of the problem. The Spanish Spring complained about the EU straitjacket (austerity) but failed to see the US straitjacket (imperialism).

The Americans, therefore, seem to have Spanish sovereignty truly trapped. The basic fact is that Spain joined the USA (1953) before it joined the EU (1986). So for Spain to be free, it is necessary to go back to the source of the slavery: the 1953 Pact of Madrid. If Spain destroys this then the liberation will follow: the liberation from the US, the EU and the King. The Republic of Spain would be reborn. But is any Spanish politician offering this truly post-Franco vision?

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