

UNIDAS PODEMOS'S CHANGING STRATEGY IN GOVERNMENT: FROM DISRUPTION TO CONSENSUS.

The coalition government commits to seeking major political and social agreements to tackle post-pandemic reconstruction • Spearheaded by the Community of Madrid, the right and far right toughen their stance to overthrow the Spanish government • Discontent on the left emerges due to the ongoing use of laws restricting freedom during lockdown



Sato Díaz | @JDSato
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Setting the Scene

A pandemic of uncertainty. The spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus around the world has brought with it growing uncertainty: the future is dark and unknown, and it is difficult to foresee what social, political and economic changes may occur in the short, medium and long term. What we can already sense is that a ferocious economic crisis is heading our way, with a dramatic slump in the macroeconomic data appearing in recent weeks. The forecasts from international institutions, governments and national banks are extremely severe.

If we have learned anything as the globalized neoliberal model has taken root and expanded in the last few decades, it is that macroeconomic data do not automatically lead to social improvements for the majority of the population when they are positive, but, on the contrary, they tend to have an immediate effect on the working classes when they are negative. The impending political battle will thus be fierce in both theory and practice. We are already seeing this at all levels: geopolitically, in Europe, and, with its own atavistic tensions, in the Spanish State.



A homeless person in the Azca business district in Madrid
(Photograph: Alvaro Minguito/El Salto Diario)

[In April](#), Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung published the first article in a series that aims to analyse the trajectory of the first coalition government in the Spanish State since the Second Republic. The experiment that brought ministers from PSOE and Unidas Podemos together in a single executive at the beginning of January has attracted attention and analysis from outside Spanish borders; the European left is watching the progress of this innovative project closely. However, while the first article was being written in March, it became clear that the analysis would focus on the government's response to one of the greatest crises in history: the COVID-19 pandemic. This focus is set to continue as the coronavirus has changed everything. Or has it?

The European Union and its institutions were hesitant and member states made poorly coordinated decisions.



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, during a press conference in Geneva (Switzerland) on 11 March 2020 (Photograph: WHO)

In the previous article, we warned that during the first weeks of the health crisis, the nation state as a political unit was the only body capable of providing a coherent response to the issue. Global markets crumbled at the appearance of the coronavirus, revealing themselves to be useless as a possible solution to the problem and leaving it to public institutions to forge a medical, political, economic and social response to the disaster. Meanwhile, supra-state organizations were slow in making decisions and putting them into practice. The WHO issued response guidelines that were not always taken into account by national governments. The European Union and its institutions were hesitant and member states made poorly coordinated decisions.

At the European level, the debate between states and different political visions is one of the main areas of dispute and the outcome of this will depend on the solutions to the crisis that are adopted in the coming years. In Spain, society follows every European decision with interest, knowing that its future well being depends to a large extent on these decisions. The Spanish government has played a central role in defending certain stances in the European sphere, such as the mutualization of debt, in collaboration with Italy and Portugal. In the end, this idea was rejected by other countries such as Germany and the Netherlands. This dealt the government a heavy blow, but it helped to focus attention on our current situation. Following several weeks of turmoil at the start of the crisis, when some believed the time had come to drive through far-reaching social and political change, nothing suggests that this is a revolutionary moment. It may be true that the political consensus is changing, although political polarization is growing and the far right is increasingly organized around the globe.

Power structures are being reaffirmed. The right, the far right and the major economic centres are exerting immediate pressure to ensure that the solution does not entail losses in the distribution of dividends by large corporations. Nonetheless, the European Parliament issued a joint declaration (albeit a non-binding one) from the main political groups and families on 15 May, warning that European institutions should take the lead. With a consensus of 80 percent of the chamber in Brussels and Strasbourg, the Parliament called on the Commission to pledge to create a common fund for reconstruction that is not based on permanently indebting member states. The joint pressure that countries such as Italy, Spain and Portugal are able to exert is essential to curb the influence of the so-called frugal countries and their policies in favour of austerity and against excessive public investment.

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In the Spanish context, politics has also shifted significantly. During the early weeks of the pandemic, the government focused on social measures, the so-called "social shield", facing an opposition that had been pacified by the shock of the medical tragedy. Hundreds of people were dying on a daily basis and the images broadcast on television reflected the extreme nature of the moment. Little by little, the Spanish right and far right have picked up the pace and developed a fierce opposition. In Spain, political battles are viscerally

fought and the right has seized on the current crisis as an opportunity to overthrow the coalition government. Coups are in the genes of part of the Spanish right, which has yet to cast off Francoism 45 years after the dictator's death, and this is a relevant factor to consider. Their tentacles extend throughout the powerful media outlets centralized in Madrid.

It is striking that hundreds of far-right protesters have mobilized in recent days in the Salamanca district in Madrid, one of the wealthiest in the country, inhabited by a population of landlords whose political origins are in some cases linked to Spain's Francoist past. These people are a minority among the Spanish population, but the attention granted to the far right by small-scale media outlets provides them with a mouthpiece that does not correspond proportionally to reality. Minority protests calling for Prime Minister Sánchez to resign have spread through some cities. Among the protesters' favourite slogans are "Freedom", as if Spain were living under a dictatorship, as if five elections had not been held in 2019 (two of them general elections) and as if the government were not the product of the parliamentary majority chosen by voters at the ballot box. People take to their balconies every day at 21:00 to bang pots and pans in protest at the government's handling of the crisis; they are loud, but not particularly numerous.



A protest in Nuñez de Balboa (Madrid) on 14 May 2020
(Photograph: Álvaro Minguito/El Salto Diario)

This opposition from the Spanish right and far right looks much like the Venezuelan opposition; it is worth recalling the close relationship between the Spanish right and far right and the most reactionary sectors in Latin America. They want to use the coronavirus tragedy to topple Pedro

Sánchez's government. These protests remain small, and, objectively, they would be irrelevant if they were not constantly amplified by the powerful right-wing media. Some opinion leaders have taken to social networks to speculate that social pressure can bring down the coalition government, paving the way for them to call new elections after the right lost the two general elections in 2019. Beyond the noise on social media and these loud yet sparse demonstrations, the polls show a certain degree of wear and tear on the coalition government, but not a victory for the right.



Meeting of the Committee for the Social and Economic Reconstruction of Spain
(Photograph: Spanish Congress)

Meanwhile, despite initially stepping up the pace with social protection measures, the government has in recent weeks reoriented its strategy to achieving wider consensus of a moderate nature. Thus, through the Reconstruction Committee recently created by the Spanish Parliament, the aim is to achieve widespread acceptance throughout the country for the response to the impending economic and

social crisis. The government, and especially Unidas Podemos, has indicated some of the strands of this consensus: constitutional shielding of the public health system specifically, much of which has been dismantled by privatization and cuts in recent years, and of public services in general; a more progressive tax system; redesigning the production model by reindustrializing the state to reverse the trend of offshoring in recent decades; acknowledging the importance of Europe as part of the solution by strengthening a broad European consensus based on these same strands to counter alternatives that aim to promote an exclusionary nationalism.

It is important to note that we cannot talk about Spain without mentioning the territorial issue. According to some surveys, the handling of the crisis is causing support for the national government to wane after it opted for a centralized solution with all power in the hands of the government and the Ministry of Health in particular, while the autonomous communities, especially those led by peripheral nationalist or pro-independence parties, have demanded greater powers to manage the pandemic. Regions governed by the right are also taking advantage of their position to rail against Sánchez and his ministers.

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This has led to obvious tensions in Congress. The coalition government does not have an absolute majority and it is supported in parliament primarily by the votes of the Basque Nationalist Party and the leftist Basque pro-independence party EH Bildu, and by the abstentions of the Catalan pro-independence party Republican Left of Catalonia. Meanwhile, the Community of Madrid, governed by the most far-right wing of Partido Popular, has spearheaded opposition to the central government in the form of its president, Isabel Díaz Ayuso.

At the same time, social movements and alternative trade unions are trying to influence the government's decisions to ensure that the response to the crisis reflects environmental concerns and entails a shift to the left that, for many, means that a political force like Unidas Podemos should form part of the Council of Ministers. Campaigns on social networks have called for the protection of public services, such as #PintoUnCorazónVerde (#I'llDrawAGreenHeart), organized by the Plataforma Plan de Choque Social which encompasses hundreds of social groups from all over Spain, or for a tax on the very rich known as the COVID Tax, in the case of #QuePaguenLosRicos (#LetTheRichPay), organized by the Anticapitalistas party which recently split off from Podemos but has obtained considerable support on social media. It should be noted that the lockdown and suspension of social gatherings has wrought havoc on movements that had so far based their organizational model on assemblies and their actions on public demonstrations and rallies.



Photomontage from the #PintoUnCorazónVerde campaign
(Photograph: Plataforma Plan de Choque Social)

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For their part, the main unions, CCOO and UGT, have been included in the consensus strategy. Together with employers, they form part of the attempt to draw up a major national reconstruction pact initiated by Congress. It is surprising that while the right-wing and far right parties (PP and Vox) continue their harassment and quest to topple the government, employers' associations have opted for the useful strategy (not without internal tensions) of participating in discussions for a major post-crisis reconstruction pact in order to protect their interests within this pact.

This suggests that, despite the economic and social cataclysm and the obvious struggle between different classes and interests that is unfolding within the lockdown, the exit strategy will be a far-reaching pact aiming to achieve broad consensus, setting aside more drastic, disruptive options at this time.

The Reconstruction Plan Proposed by Unidas Podemos: From Disruption to Consensus

One of the great challenges that Spain faces as a country is the “Reconstruction Plan” mentioned earlier: a large-scale political and social pact to help the country emerge from this crisis and to lay the foundations for its future economy and society. That this has come at a time when Unidas Podemos is in government is especially significant. We must bear in mind that the two political organizations that make up this coalition, with the exception of the various regional convergences, are Podemos and Izquierda Unida. In the very recent past, both groups have championed political documents breaking with the so-called 78 Regime, which emerged from the transition from dictatorship to democracy and whose balance of power was set out in the 1978 Constitution. Now, far from advocating disruption, they are calling from within government for pacts to be established and a national consensus to be reached in the context of severe international crisis.

It is curious to note how the idea of these reconstruction pacts arrived in Spain. Such pacts are far from exotic: most countries are already exploring their options for reconstruction, regardless of the political orientations of their executives, as are the European institutions. However, as noted above, Spain has its own political idiosyncrasies and the visceral nature of its politics is a hallmark of the country. This is why, when faced with the oncoming crisis and the fact that a left-wing party further to the left than PSOE, Unidas Podemos, is in government for the first time since the 1930s, some media outlets and moderate progressive “opinion-makers” began to raise the idea of creating new Moncloa Pacts (this signifier is important) at the end of March. Meanwhile, the radical left called for Unidas Podemos to exert greater pressure for disruptive measures from within government and did not approve the idea of the pact. The right-wing and far right political parties and media outlets tried to erase any possibility of such an agreement: their goal is to overthrow the government and remove Unidas Podemos from power.

Prime Minister Sánchez took up the challenge in one of his many televised appearances during this crisis, explaining that there would be new Moncloa Pacts, a far-reaching national political and social pact based on three axes: a political axis encompassing the current broad spectrum of political forces represented in Congress; a social axis involving civil society organizations, unions and employers; and an institutional axis with the autonomous communities and city councils. The PP’s refusal to participate in this grand spectacle, which could consolidate the image of the socialist Prime Minister as the great statesman of the moment, did not take long to arrive. For this reason, agreements will now be made on specific issues and debated in Congress.

Concerning the social axis, on 11 May, the government, trade unions and employers' associations signed a joint agreement to extend the temporary layoff scheme designed to avoid dismissals caused by the pandemic until July. As for the political axis, a Reconstruction Committee was created in Congress two days later. It should be noted that PP opposed the agreement between the parties being made in Moncloa, the headquarters of the executive, prompting it to be executed at the headquarters of the legislature and stealing the spotlight from Prime Minister Sánchez.



Signatories of the Moncloa Pacts on 27 July 1977 (Photograph: Archive)

In this context, Unidas Podemos was obliged to justify its strategy for a national

pact from within government. It is here that the first signifier, Moncloa Pacts, takes on particular relevance, to be replaced later by the concept of "Reconstruction". The Moncloa Pacts, which were signed in October 1977 in the midst of the transition from dictatorship to democracy, included the participation of the Communist Party, which had been legalized a few months earlier. Through these pacts, the Spanish Communist Party returned to high-level politics in Spain following several dark decades of dictatorship, hiding and exile, becoming an important vector in the drafting of the 1978 Constitution, which recognized social rights equivalent to any other European constitution of the time. The Moncloa Pacts, which included employers' associations and the main trade unions, served to adopt a consensus policy that curbed high rates of inflation following the international oil crisis in 1973. In return, the unions and left-wing parties had to accept a reduction in workers' purchasing power.

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While the Spanish Communist Party was one of the cornerstones of the great constitutional agreement at that time, Unidas Podemos (a coalition which encompasses Izquierda Unida, itself a coalition including the Spanish Communist Party) is currently seeking to revive the communist negotiating tradition of 1978 for the national agreement it wishes to reach. Just as the Communist Party abandoned attempts at revolution back then to encourage the transition from dictatorship to democracy, Unidas Podemos is now maturing and relinquishing its call to break away from the 78 Regime. This demand emerged in the 15M movement nine years ago, which formed the sociological basis for Podemos and gave IU a reason to adopt a more combative position towards PSOE. Now, it is time for consensus and Unidas Podemos is throwing its weight behind the Reconstruction Pacts.

On 13 May, the second vice-president of the government, Pablo Iglesias, who is responsible for the government's social policies and the 2030 Agenda, spoke in the Senate. "This is no longer a two-party programme; it is a national programme with measures based on a broad social consensus, and in order to develop this reconstruction programme we want to reach out to everyone", he said, referring to the policies that the government is attempting to introduce during the pandemic. Now is not the time to build a progressive government agenda as if this were a normal term: at this historical time, the realization has dawned that the agenda must be national, forging a great pact "that leaves no one behind."



The second vice-president and Minister for Social Rights, Pablo Iglesias, speaks in the Senate (Photograph: Emilio Naranjo)

So far, we know that the measures to be proposed by Unidas Podemos to the Reconstruction Committee in Congress include a new tax on the very rich and a plan for public management of nursing homes, many of which are managed by private companies and have been the epicentre of

COVID-19 deaths. More measures will be announced in the coming weeks. Regarding the new tax, Unidas Podemos has stated that "many companies and families will need support from society through public policies to avoid being left behind" and "investment will also be needed to rebuild parts of our productive framework, so as not to neglect research that can save lives, and to reinforce public services such as medical care, social care and residential homes where we care for our elders". The new tax proposed by Unidas Podemos, which will be discussed along with proposals from other parties in the committee, would exempt permanent residences up to 400,000 euros and impose a tax of 2 percent on net assets above 1 million euros, 2.5 percent above 10 million euros, 3 percent above 50 million and 3.5 percent above 100 million. PSOE has not spoken out in favour of this new tax on the wealthiest in society for now.

Plurinationality and the Autonomous Communities

The 1978 Spanish Constitution recognizes the existence of "historical nationalities" within the Spanish State. The territorial formula of the state is based on autonomous communities in a semi-federal model, under which some powers are transferred to the communities. It is not a federal model in which the different federations, each with their own sovereignty, decide to federate, but a distribution of political competences in different areas: education, health care, social services, environment, management of some taxes, etc. On the other hand, some of these autonomous communities have had nationalist movements for centuries, which the Constitution refers to as "historical nationalities" after an arduous constitutional debate in 1978 that established that there is only one indissoluble nation: the Spanish nation.

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leading to constant political friction.*



Banners calling for freedom of speech and freedom for political and exiled prisoners at the Palau de la Generalitat in Catalonia (Photograph: RTVE.es)

This means that Spanish politics is marked by constant regional tensions, a problem which is far from being solved. Part of society in Euskadi (Basque Country) and, to a lesser extent, Navarra, has nationalist and pro-independence tendencies. So does Catalonia, where the conflict is especially intense after the events of 2017, when the 1 October

consultation met a fiercely repressive police and judicial response from the Spanish State. The main leaders of the movement, from the JxCat and ERC parties, are either in prison following the Supreme Court ruling in October last year or in exile in several European states. In Galicia, nationalist demands are expressed by the Bloque Nacionalista Gallego (Galician Nationalist Bloc) party. Other regions have their own national peculiarities, leading to constant political friction.

As a result, Spanish politics is always linked to a system of territorial balances embodied by the role played by the autonomous communities in managing co-governance with the Spanish government and the presence of these political forces in Congress. This is now more important than ever, as the majority for Sánchez's government achieved in January would not have been possible



Campaign banner from Teruel Existe (Photograph: teruelexiste.info)

without the support, by action or omission through abstention, of political forces such as ERC, the Catalan pro-independence party, PNV, the Basque nationalist party, EH Bildu, the Basque pro-independence party, BNG, the Galician pro-independence party, Coalición Canaria (the Canarian nationalist party), etc. In addition, Teruel Existe, a political organization which emerged from a citizen movement based on demanding rights for forgotten rural regions to benefit from the economic development of recent decades, has a representative with arithmetic importance in the current parliament.

The government took on a leading role, with long presidential appearances on television every week, sometimes more than once, and a stream of press conferences, up to three a day, with public appearances from different ministers, especially the Minister of Health, Salvador Illa.

Until now, as we have mentioned, the government's management of the coronavirus crisis has been centralized by giving full control to the government and to the Ministry of Health in particular. With the declaration of the state of alarm on 14 March, which has been renewed in Congress every 15 days, the government took on more powers than usual, increasing the importance of the Ministry of Health, which until now had few powers as health services are devolved to the autonomous communities.

From the outset, in this context of federal tendencies and national conflicts, criticism of this centralizing decision did not take long to emerge, but the shock of the medical emergency overshadowed the voices of the critics. The government took on a leading role, with long presidential appearances on television every week, sometimes more than once, and a stream of press conferences, up to three a day, with public appearances from different ministers, especially the Minister of Health, Salvador Illa. In addition, the technical crisis committee appeared publicly every day. Although the most prominent member of the technical committee is epidemiologist Fernando Simón, the press conferences have also featured the Chief of the Defence Staff, dressed in military uniform, and high-ranking members of the National Police and Civil Guard, also in uniform. Criticism from the left and from nationalist parties immediately arose. It should be noted that some autonomous communities have certain devolved policing powers and their own security forces.

These conflicts intensified further in the week of 4 May, when the government had to ask Congress to extend the state of alarm for another 15 days. The government's excessively centralized management had overlooked dialogue with the peripheral nationalist and independence parties that have the parliamentary representation needed to maintain a majority. The government had acted as if it had an absolute majority. Political tensions continued to rise until the very last moment, when the right-wing Ciudadanos party (a member of the European liberal group) decided to vote in

favour. Since this wake-up call, the government has established a more fluid relationship with the minority parties in recent days and it is expected that they will be able to reach an agreement in order to extend the state of alarm for another month.

In this regard, in the de-escalation process designed to establish a new normal after the lockdown, the government is adopting a “co-governance” approach with the autonomous communities. De-escalation is taking place in stages in an asymmetrical manner. In each phase, depending on certain medical criteria such as the number of hospital and ICU beds and the rate of new COVID-19 infections, citizens are beginning to regain their mobility rights and economic activities are gradually restarting. The autonomous communities play a central role in these decisions, which are ultimately subject to the oversight of the Ministry of Health. They are also participating fully in managing de-escalation in their own territories.

The case of the Community of Madrid is particularly relevant. The president of the region, Díaz Ayuso, is a member of the most right-wing branch of the PP and has thus far been supported by the party's president, Pablo Casado. With her coarse, belligerent style, Ayuso has become the main spearhead of right and far-right opposition to the central executive, following in the footsteps of the FAES Foundation, chaired by former Prime Minister, José María Aznar. Madrid is the region most affected by the pandemic in the Spanish State and the numerous budget cuts to health care by right-wing governments in recent years have left the region's health system highly vulnerable as a result of this neoliberal decision-making.

Madrid therefore remains in "phase 0": meetings are forbidden, bar terraces are closed, shops can only open with very restrictive measures and citizens continue to experience very limited mobility. Ayuso has made confrontation with Sánchez's government (which she refers to as a "social communist" government) her main way of drawing attention away from her own mistakes in managing the crisis. Using highly threatening language, she has even suggested that social clashes will increase, endorsing the citizens of the Salamanca district in Madrid in breaking the lockdown rules with demonstrations against the Spanish government. As mentioned earlier, these mobilizations are reminiscent of the Venezuelan coup and are linked to the far right, which has Franc'joist ties but remains a minority, albeit a very noisy one that is amplified by prominent media outlets.



Gran Vía (Madrid) in March 2020 (Photograph: Álvaro Minguito / El Salto Diario)

Whereas other autonomous communities, such as Castile and León, Murcia, Galicia and Andalusia (which are also governed by the right-wing, like Madrid), seem to be more in tune with the central government when it comes to managing the crisis caused by the pandemic, Madrid continues to foment sporadic conflict and accuse the government of wanting to harm the region in the de-escalation process. Internal tensions within the Madrid regional government, a coalition between PP and Ciudadanos, are increasingly palpable. It is possible that the alliance will collapse, which could

lead to a no-confidence motion against Ayuso in a few months' time and an agreement between PSOE and Ciudadanos in Madrid.



Pedro Sánchez and Inés Arrimadas in December 2019 (Photograph: Getty Images)

This is relevant from a political perspective as it would mean a change of alliances for Ciudadanos, which has so far almost always reached an agreement with PP and Vox. The party could therefore shift to the centre in order to seek points of concord with PSOE. This could cause majorities in Congress to fluctuate. As in the week of 4 May, the government could rely on the 10 votes from the Ciudadanos representatives to approve the 2021 State Budget, which will serve as an emergency fund to address the crisis caused by the

coronavirus. This could reduce the influence of Unidas Podemos on the government's economic policies. For now, this all remains hypothetical, but PSOE's ability to switch from a leftist discourse to a moderate one never ceases to amaze.

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Public Liberties and Civil Rights

We have already noted the constant presence of uniformed military police officials at press conferences. This government communication strategy changed several weeks ago when the directors of the security forces stopped making public TV appearances. Despite this, the discontent among certain social groups due to the excessive militarization of the language used by the government during the crisis (when it referred to the response to the medical emergency as a war on the coronavirus) is clear.

Countless videos of police operations have been watched on social networks during the weeks of the lockdown; the content of these videos may be described as abusive and clearly contrasts with the behaviour of officers during far right protests in recent days, where protesters have flouted security measures and regulations without reaction from officers. The significant presence of far-right elements in the ranks of the police forces and the army is a reality that has been explored in several publications. An increase in the right-wing vote share at polling stations located near to police or civil guard barracks or residences has also been observed. The armed forces and security corps tend much more to the right than society as a whole.

Then there is the matter of the Minister of Internal Affairs, the magistrate Fernando Grande-Marlaska, who has not hesitated to adopt aggressive measures on immigration that have aroused criticism from human rights groups. He has made only mild criticism of police behaviour which has been far from exemplary. The political leanings of the Minister of Internal Affairs are a point of contention in Unidas Podemos and a source of friction within the coalition government. The left accuses him of being highly conservative, causing him to clash with Iglesias's ministers.



Fernando Grande-Marlaska at a press conference on 29 April 2020 (Photograph: Moncloa)

In addition, police officials are using the Citizen Security Law to punish people who break the lockdown. This law is better known as the "gag law" and was approved in Congress in 2015 by the PP, the party in government at that time. The law contains very restrictive rules on civil liberties and citizen rights, such as freedom of assembly, freedom to demonstrate or freedom of speech itself. The law was approved in a context of significant social mobilization following the 15M, when the economic impacts of the previous economic crisis, which began in 2008, were wreaking havoc on broad sectors of society. It aimed to control citizen protests in response to high levels of social unrest at a time when economic inequality was becoming increasingly acute. With the gag law, the state was also preparing possible responses to a growing mobilization of the pro-independence movement in Catalonia.

That the progressive coalition government is using the gag law during the state of alarm adopted to tackle the pandemic is indeed contradictory. Both PSOE and Unidas Podemos have always been against the law, like many human rights organizations, and their own joint agenda included replacing it with new legislation. Both PSOE and the parties in Unidas Podemos appealed against the law in the Constitutional Court when Mariano Rajoy's government passed it, although no ruling has yet been issued.

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Anti-Repression Coordinating Committee in the Murcia Region (Photograph: Kaosenlared)

For that matter, it is worth mentioning that the Secretary General of the Communist Party and parliamentary representative of Unidas Podemos, Enrique Santiago, who has an impressive track record as a defence attorney for human rights, has spoken out against the application of the gag law several times during the state of alarm.

"Applying a law that penalizes more harshly when there are other prior options does not seem appropriate to us, the State Attorney or the Ombudsman", he notes. Criticism from other left-wing parliamentary parties in Congress, which are not represented in the government, is now constant. Indeed, in March, before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, several groups in Congress began to work to repeal the gag law.

In the midst of the pandemic, the ideological debate takes centre stage in all aspects of politics. We see this at the global level, the European level, and, with its own particularities, in the Spanish State. The coalition government faces a major smear campaign from the right and far right, who wish to overthrow it. Economic and social reconstruction is the main political driving force at the current time. And in this new context, in a world of constant, pandemic-driven change, Unidas Podemos seeks to forge

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widespread citizen consensus for the forthcoming policy cycle. The pact is taking its place among more disruptive options at a historical time which may very well disrupt all that has gone before.