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"Ara es l'hora?" The approach of the Catalan political scene to independence issues

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Ara es l'hora?

The Approach of the Catalan Political Scene to Independence Issues

Ara es l'hora?

Katalońska scena polityczna wobec kwestii niepodległości

• Abstrakt •

Sytuacja polityczna w Katalonii w ciągu ostatnich miesięcy zmienia się jak w kalejdoskopie. Katalońskie ruchy narodowe konsekwentnie kontynuują starania na rzecz utworzenia niepodległego państwa, w efekcie czego każde głosowanie – czy to nieoficjalne referendum, czy wybory lokalne, czy też wybory do katalońskiego parlamentu – urasta do rangi plebiscytu w sprawie niepodległości. Coraz dalej i szybciej posuwającym się poczynaniom Katalończyków coraz ostrzej sprzeciwia się rząd centralny, grożąc władzom Katalonii szeregiem sankcji w sytuacji podjęcia dalszych, konkretnych kroków na rzecz oderwania się od Hiszpanii. Choć „na zewnątrz” katalońskie stronnictwa niepodległościowe zdają się tworzyć monolit, sytuacja na regionalnej scenie politycznej jest dużo bardziej skomplikowana. W ciągu ostatnich kilkunastu miesięcy układ sił partyjnych w Katalonii całkowicie się przeobraził. Rozpadowi uległa rządząca przez niemal trzydzieści lat Convergència i Unió, zaś wynik wyborów z 27 września zmusił dotychczasowego premiera Artura Masa (wywodzącego się z centroprawicowego CiU) i przywódców nowej proniepo-

• Abstract •

The political situation in Catalonia during the last months is changing almost daily. Catalan nationalist movements consistently continue their efforts to create an independent state. As a result, every vote – an unofficial plebiscite, local elections or elections to the Catalan parliament – is treated like a referendum on the matter of independence. The Catalan actions that are ever more faster and further-reaching meet with a growing opposition of the central government, threatening the Catalan authorities with a number of sanctions in case of taking further, concrete steps to break away from Spain. Although, from the outside, the Catalan independence parties seem to be a monolith, the situation on the regional political scene is much more complex. During the past several months, the balance of power of political parties in Catalonia was completely changed. Ruling for almost thirty years, Convergència i Unió divided and the results of the election of 27 September forced Prime Minister Artur Mas (of the centre-right CiU) and the leaders of the new pro-independence coalition Junts pel Si to seek an ally in the far-left Popular Unity

dległościowej koalicji Junts pel Si do poszukiwania sojusznika w skrajnie lewicowej Candidatura Unitat Popular. Przed Katalonią zatem czas trudnych wyborów, nie tylko w odniesieniu do kwestii niepodległości, ale również sojuszy zawieranych na krajowej scenie politycznej.

W niniejszym artykule postaram się przeanalizować obecny kształt sceny politycznej Katalonii i jego wpływ na dążenia niepodległościowe Wspólnoty Autonomicznej. Przeanalizuję dotychczasowy układ sił partyjnych oraz zmiany, jakie zaszły w nim na przestrzeni 2015 roku. Przyjrę się programom wiodących – w ostatnich latach, jak i obecnie, ugrupowań katalońskich pod kątem ich stosunku do kwestii niepodległości. Wreszcie zastanowię się, w jakim stopniu złożona sytuacja na katalońskiej scenie politycznej może stać się determinantą skuteczności postulatów niepodległościowych, podejmowanych przez władze Katalonii.

Słowa kluczowe: Katalonia, niepodległość, nacjonalizm, system partyjny

Candidacy. Therefore, this is a time of difficult choices for Catalonia, not only in relation to the issue of independence, but also when it comes to alliances on the national political scene.

In this article, I will try to analyze the current political scene in Catalonia and its impact on the independence aspirations of the Autonomous Community. I will examine the current balance of power of political parties and the changes that have occurred in 2015. I will look at the programmes of the leading – in recent years as well as currently – Catalan political factions in terms of their outlook on the issue of independence. Finally, I will consider in what way the complex situation on the Catalan political scene may become a determinant of the effectiveness of the demands for independence made by the authorities of Catalonia.

Keywords: Catalonia, independence, nationalism, party system

Ara es l'hora? Introduction

“Now is the Time” (*Ara es l'hora*). Under this slogan marched the supporters of Catalonia’s independence from across the region, united on 11 November, during a national holiday. In recent years, Catalan independence ambitions grew and the question whether Spain will split up is more and more often and more seriously posed, not only by international relations analysts, but also by the media in Europe. The Catalans are being convinced that “Now is the Time” not only by national movements but also by political factions which express these demands boldly and openly, including Prime Minister Artur Mas and the ruling party. In their opinion, Catalonia has never been so close to independence.

However, a deeper analysis reveals that the situation on the Catalan political scene is much more complex. Divisions (also within the ruling party), corruption scandals, difficult alliances and warnings more and more often directed by the central government at the Autonomous Community make the Catalan road to independence less smooth and peaceful than it might have seemed at first. What is more, a new alignment of political forces that developed in 2015 on the Catalan

political scene changed the previous shape of the regional party system and its relative balance. Therefore, matters concerning party agreements, forging alliances and forming opposition may soon become one of the main factors determining the success of the Catalan independence process.

In this article, I will endeavour to analyse the changes that occurred on the Catalan political scene over the course of the last several months. I shall present the leading – in recent years as well as currently – political factions in the region and examine their programmes in terms of their views on independence. Lastly, I will give some thought to the question to what degree the complexity of the Catalan political scene may determine the success of independence demands made by the Catalan government.

Due to the topicality of the discussed subject and the fact that the described processes and changes occur every day on the Catalan political scene, I will base my article on the source material – political parties' programmes, election results, and documents adopted by the Catalan authorities. They will be complemented by Internet sources, especially in the case of the most recent events. In this case, the sources of information shall predominantly include news and announcements made by particular political factions.

It needs to be stressed that this paper pertains to the situation in Catalonia in late November 2015 – during the time when the new government was being formed after the election to the Catalan parliament that took place in September 2015. In this case, “we witness history as it happens” – by the time this article is published, some of the described facts and predictions for the future may become outdated. The reader should be aware of this.

Catalan Political Scene after September 2015 Election

Even though the Catalan political scene has been under scrutiny of political factions, analysts, and the media across Europe for the past several years, it was especially the election to the Catalan parliament held on 27 September 2015 that put the Autonomy in the spotlight. The supporters of separation from Spain dubbed this event a referendum on sovereignty. On 11 November, during a Catalan national holiday, more than one million people (according to organizers, who chose *Via Lliure* as its watchword, this number exceeded 2 million) took to the streets of Barcelona to create a multicolour mosaic that symbolized the values on which the independent Catalan state is to be based and to shout “*Ara es l'hora*” – “Now is the Time” (*Nadszedł czas*, 2015).

The demonstration organized by *Assemblea Nacional Catalana* was one of the main events during the election campaign, the main item of which became the attitude towards the issue of independence. Catalan national parties hoped that achieving absolute majority in the parliament by independence parties rallying under the banners of separation from Spain would be the final and decisive argument for starting the process of achieving full sovereignty and showing the world that these demands are supported by the majority of the Catalan society. In contrast, their defeat would be deemed by the supporters of the Autonomous Community remaining within the Spanish borders a proof that the majority of the Catalans are not behind these radical demands.

The 2015 election result, instead of finally resolving this issue, created an even more complex situation on the Catalan political scene. Pro-independence parties – centre-right *Junts pel Si* (Together for Yes) and far-left CUP – *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular* (The Popular Unity Candidates) won 47.33% of the vote (and thus failed to achieve absolute majority) and the majority of (72 seats – 62 and 10 for *Junts pel Si* and CUP respectively) seats in the Catalan parliament (*Większość absolutna...*, 2015). Such an election result allowed both the supporters of independence and factions favouring Catalonia remaining a part of Spain (and being subordinate to the government in Madrid) to proclaim victory and read it as a confirmation of their theses (*Gorzkie zwycięstwo...*, 2015).

Despite the controversies connected to the interpretation of the election results, the new majority in the parliament wasted no time to indicate the Catalan policymakers' direction. On 9 November, the Parliament of Catalonia adopted a resolution in which it formally announced taking measures aimed at separation from Spain and achieving independence. 72 deputies (all *Junts pel Si* and CUP deputies) voted in favour, while 63 opposition deputies voted against it. The resolution clearly announces the beginning of the process which is to lead to the establishment of a sovereign Catalan state that will take the form of a republic. The parliament invokes the democratic mandate won in September elections and appeals to the Catalan government to realize it by taking all measures necessary to put the resolution in practice. The subsequent steps should follow immediately – according to the resolution, within 30 days from its passing new legal acts on the process of the establishment of a new state and creating the foundations of the Catalan welfare system and the Catalan Tax Agency should be adopted. Moreover, according to the position of the Parliament, this process is independent from any Spanish authority, including the Constitutional Court of Spain. Immunity from jurisdiction of the latter, according to the resolution, originates from the lack of legitimacy to judge in the matters considering Catalonia after the controversial

verdict of the Court of 2010 when it repealed some of the regulations from the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia of 2006, despite the fact that this act was previously adopted and accepted in a universal referendum (*Resolution 1/XI*, 2015).

The adoption of the resolution prompted an instantaneous reaction of the Spanish authorities. On 11 November, the Spanish state attorney lodged an application with the Constitutional Court for the annulment of the document in conflict with the Spanish law. Simultaneously, Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy announced that he will not see Catalonia separated from Spain. Constitutional Court took the application under consideration and ordered to withhold all of the described procedures until the announcement of the verdict. At the same time, it declared that if the Autonomous Community authorities fail to comply, they would face suspension from duty and legal sanctions (*Przepychanka prawna...*, 2015). In spite of this fact, the Catalan government announced that it would continue the process of the preparation to separate from Spain.

Despite the fact that it seems that the pro-independence parties maintain a unified position when looking at the intransigent attitude of the Generalitat, it is difficult to call the current coalition ruling Catalonia a monolith. It is a political pact necessitated by the election results and both parties' voters' expectations to continue the process of preparation to separate from Spain. Outside the issue of independence, the winner of the election – Junts pel Si – and its coalition partner – CUP – differ in almost everything: origins, ideology, programmes – both regarding the model of state organization and the road to sovereignty itself. It is enough to say that the politicians from this party until recently demanded that one of the Junts pel Si leaders, the former and current Prime Minister Artur Mas, be removed from power on the basis of allegations of corruption on a large scale. In addition, the demands of CUP include, for example, abolishment of private means of production – which is unacceptable for a centre-right party (*Gorzkie zwycięstwo...*, PAP, 2015). Moreover, CUP demands an immediate separation from Spain, while Junts pel Si calls for an 18-month preparatory period. However, the distribution of seats in the newly elected parliament (62 for Junts pel Si, 10 for CUP, and 63 for parties opposing a complete separation of Catalonia from Spain) necessitates both parties to seek a difficult compromise for the realization of the independence dream.

Catalan Political Parties and the Issue of Independence – A Historical Overview

This unusual coalition would seem impossible several months ago. In recent years, the same four parties remained the most important actors on the Catalan political scene – among whom only two won seats in the parliament without reorganizing and neither is a leading party.

The most important Catalan political faction of the last 30 years was CiU – *Convergència i Unió*, which governed continuously since 1980 with one seven-year interruption in the years 2003–2010. This faction consisted of two parties: centre CDC – *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* (among the members of which was the long-standing President of the Generalitat Jordi Pujol) – and Christian-democratic UDC – *Unió Democràtica de Catalunya*. Most of the time, this party was characterized by moderate nationalism, aiming at increasing autonomy within the borders of the Spanish state. However, this position changed in the last five years when Artur Mas became the leader and the faction started to advance the idea of full independence. This is visible after an analysis of the political programmes of the factions. In the document of 2006 there are not many references to independence – the largest number of points pertain to economy and society and the ones that do refer to the “Catalan question” concern the competences of the authorities in reference to the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia being written at the time. However, the political programme of CiU from 2010 puts the issue of independence in the forefront. This document is entitled “CANVI SÍ” (which can be translated as “Yes for Change”) and the word *nació* (nation) in reference to Catalonia is one of the most common names used. “Catalonia is a nation. Owing to its history, its identity, but most importantly because it feels like a nation and wants to be one” (*Convergència i Unió*, 2010) – as reads the chapter entitled “*nació*”. In the CiU election programme of 2012 these ideas are even more radical. “We want to build a wide social majority, so that Catalonia has its own state in the European framework, because Catalonia has the will to be a normal country among the countries and nations of the world” – reads the CiU election manifesto in the introduction to its political programme (*Convergència i Unió*, 2012). In the same year, CiU signed an agreement – the declaration of aspirations to independence – with the left-side party *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (Kozłowska, 2014).

In spite of simultaneously increasing and using the popularity of the independence ideas among the Catalans, CiU has been consistently losing support in recent years. While in 2010 (when this party once more rose to power after seven

years – the only period in the history of the Autonomous Community when it was replaced by the left) it had around 37% of the vote; two years later, after the early election called by Prime Minister Mas, this number was only 30%.

Simultaneously, a notable rise in support was gained by a different party with a pro-independence agenda – Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (the Republican Left of Catalonia). ERC, in its demands, was more radical than CiU, consistently promoting the idea of full independence of Catalonia. This political faction, placed in the middle of the Catalan political scene in terms of the level of support, in 2003 and 2006 elections won respectively 16.47% (*Eleccions*, 2003) and 14.03% (*Eleccions*, 2006) of the vote, while in 2010 it received a meagre 7% of the vote (*Eleccions*, 2010). In 2012 it was successful in regaining its position – winning 13.70% of the vote (*Eleccions*, 2012), ERC became the second power in the Catalan parliament.

The programme of ERC for years maintained a strictly pro-independence character. Radical demands to create a sovereign Catalan state as an actor on the international scene were included in every political programme in the past 10 years. This demand was expressed directly in the document of 2012. “Catalonia wants to make a proposal to the entire world. A proposal that is radically democratic, based on the right to decide, which places the sovereignty of the people in the centre of the national and social life. Catalonia has an opportunity to create the first state appropriate for the 21st century: founded on social (...) and economic stability. A state built on social participation, democracy, and the right to choose. A state associated with the European Union. The first state in the world built for the future” (*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, 2012). The party also created a roadmap for achieving independence in the shortest possible period. It cooperated with other regional parties from different countries in the EU and has a representation in European Parliament (Kosowska-Gąstoł, 2013).

On the other side of the political scene, there are political parties that are in favour of Catalonia remaining within the borders of Spain. The strongest is PSC – Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (The Socialists’ Party of Catalonia) – a Catalan counterpart of PSOE – Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party). “This was the only party in the 30-year history of the Catalan Autonomy that was able to replace CiU as the leading party (in the years 2003–2010). In the 2003 election it received 31.17% of the vote (*Eleccions*, 2003). Despite the fact that in this election PSC in theory lost to CiU, thanks to the coalition with ERC and the Greens, it achieved majority and formed the government headed by Pasqual Maragall i Mira. In the subsequent election, PSC won even less of the vote (again CiU won the highest amount of votes); however, the coalition

maintained the majority by 5 seats in the parliament and José Montilla Aguilera became Prime Minister. The rule of the left in Catalonia ended in 2010, when PSC received only 18.38% of the vote (*Eleccions*, 2010). It was the time when, among the left-wing parties, ERC was rising in popularity, voicing the demand for the independence of Catalonia. “At the same time, PSC maintains a moderate position, and the subject of independence is not one of the main issues in its political programme. It favours working towards a consensus and securing the Catalans a satisfactory level of autonomy within the Spanish state. It is important to note that during the parallel rule of PSC in Catalonia and PSOE in Spain it was possible to adopt the new Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, granting wider competences to the Generalitat (in part revoked by the Constitutional Court of Spain). In subsequent years, the Statute – first, in the matter of a more effective use of its regulations (Programa electoral, 2010) and later, considering the necessity to modify this document – remained in the centre of attention of the demands of PSC on the subject of autonomy. PSC, in contrast to the also left-wing ERC, was far from demanding radical changes”.

An exception among the mostly regional Catalan parties is the People’s Party, maintaining an all-Spanish character, even though in Catalonia it is represented by a local faction – Partit Popular de Catalunya – People’s Party of Catalonia. It lags behind the above-mentioned parties (also it did not enter into coalition with either), but it regularly wins 11–13% of the vote (*Eleccions*, 2014) and maintains a stable number of seats in the parliament. PPC is a centre-right party and, much like the all-Spanish People’s Party, it is against not only the separatist ambitions of Catalonia but also a too strong Catalan autonomy, propagating the idea of unity and territorial integrity of Spain. Therefore, PPC is mostly supported by voters identifying themselves as Spanish rather than Catalan and being supporters of Catalonia remaining in the structure of the Spanish state and a limited autonomy of the region.

Transformations on the Catalan Political Scene before the 2015 Election

This seemingly constant balance of power on the Catalan political scene was almost completely demolished in 2015. Most of all, CiU, ruling in Catalonia for decades (with a short pause), divided in June 2015. The source of this split was the issue of independence of Catalonia. While CDC, led by Artur Mas, was in favour of achieving full sovereignty even if it had to be unilaterally proclaimed, UDC

advocated entering into negotiations with the Spanish authorities, considering the agreement of the central government as the condition of establishing a new state. The divergences increasing over the last months eventually lead to a split between CDC and UDC (Barrena, 2015). The latter, however, declared maintaining cooperation with CDC in the government and the parliament until election due in September.

Soon the politicians from pro-independence parties started to work towards building a new alliance. This agreement seemed exotic at first, since a joint run in the election was discussed by representatives of the central, liberal CDC and the republican left – ERC. However, both parties were united by the issue of independence. This agreement under the name of *Junts pel Si* was officially declared on 20 July; it was made between Artur Mas – the current Prime Minister and leader of CDC, Oriol Junqueras, ERC leader, and also Raül Romeva – a former Member of the European Parliament of The Greens/European Free Alliance and an expert in international relations, Muriel Casals of Òmnium Cultural – an association with a tradition of several dozen years, promoting Catalan culture and language, and Carme Forcadell, heading *Assemblea Nacional Catalana* (ANC), one of the most popular Catalan organizations that promote the establishment of a sovereign Catalan state, well-known for organizing annual demonstrations of 11 November, on the day of national holiday of Catalonia (*Presentació*, 2015). The electoral lists of the movement contained, apart from the leading CDC and ERC politicians, a number of independent candidates – leaders of the social life of Catalonia, including Lluís Llach – a Catalan bard, the author of the famous *L'Estaca* (the original melody to which J. Kaczmarski wrote the lyrics of *Mury*) – and Josep Guardiola, a former football player and coach of FC Barcelona (*Junts pel Si anuncia...*, 2015). The leading watchword of *Junts pel Si* was “safe transition to a new state” (*Junts pel Si*, 2015). This political faction demanded the right for the Catalans to decide on the establishment of their own country and presented a roadmap for its creation as well as a vision of a society based on the values of justice, solidarity, democracy, and freedom (*Junts pel Si*, 2015).

Junts pel Si, which allied the recently most popular political factions, instantly became one of the favourites in the September election. Its position was further strengthened given that *Junts pel Si* declared the election to be a kind of a referendum on the issue of the Catalan independence, thus uniting most of the pro-independence movements and convincing the voters who wanted a sovereign Catalonia that it was possible only in case of a good election result. This issue however also became a mobilizing factor for the parties standing against the separation of Catalonia from Spain. The leading party, which was an alternative

to the pro-independence movements, was the Ciutadanos (lit. Citizens), a centre party. The Ciutadanos were not a new player – they were established in 2006 as a social movement by famous public personas, as a new force on the Catalan political scene. The Ciutadanos were against putting the issue of independence at the centre of the debate and negating all that is Spanish by the Catalan parties, and at the same time appealed to politicians to take up the truly important problems that affect the political, social, and economic life. The Citizens focused mainly on the matters concerning the economy. They were critical of the growing aspirations of pro-independence movements, accusing them of discrimination against those residents of Catalonia that identified themselves as Spanish, and spoke against the Catalan language completely replacing Spanish (tellingly, despite the fact that this party uses the Catalan name Ciutadans and Spanish Ciutadanos, it is the latter that is more prominent on their webpage). The Citizens stood for election in Catalonia since 2006, but they achieved limited support – both in the first election and four years later, they managed to win little more than 3% of the vote. In spite of the fact that in 2012 election Ciutadanos received twice as much support, they still were not recognized as an important player on the Catalan political scene. This situation changed only in 2015, when the Citizens assumed a leading position among the residents of Catalonia who were against the separation from Spain.

Another party representing this faction is the left-wing coalition Catalunya Sí que es Pot, established for the September election and uniting the Greens, Esquerra Unida i Alternativa (a left-wing party uniting a number of small factions) as well as the all-Spanish Podemos. This political group focused its programme mostly on the economic and social matters and devoted their campaign to the critique of Prime Minister Artur Mas and accusing him of involvement in corruption. The issues related to the independence aspirations of Catalonia were placed far down the list (19th position). Importantly, this party did not completely negate the Catalan independence aspirations; on the contrary, it maintained that the Catalans should have the right to decide on all matters that concern them, and the political future of Catalonia should be decided in a referendum (*Catalonia Si...*, 2015). However, the potential increase in autonomy should progress in agreement with the Spanish state.

Election without a Victor – A Difficult Catalan Coalition

These three parties – newly established or growing in importance over the past several months – after the election on 27 September 2015 became the leaders on the political scene. They were joined by PSC, the only “old” party that was among

the victors of the previous election. The election, despite the clear victory of Junts pel Si, revealed a significant division of the Catalan political scene. The victorious party won 39.59% of the vote, which secured it 62 seats in the Parliament; however, the opponents of separation of Catalonia from Spain won 63 seats in total (respectively, Ciutadanos – 17.9% and 25 seats, PSC – 12.72% and 16 seats, Catalunya Sí que es Pot – 8.94% and 11 seats, and PPC – 8.49% and 11 seats). In order to fulfil all demands (and voters' expectations on taking concrete measures to create a sovereign Catalan state) Junts pel Si was forced to enter into coalition with a far-left party CUP. This coalition was all the more difficult given that CUP previously declined to jointly stand for election as part of Junts pel Si and one of the demands made by the party was the resignation of Prime Minister Artur Mas. It would also seem that political programmes of Junts pel Si and CUP are incompatible. Admittedly, due to the union of centre-liberal CDC with leftist ERC the programme of the new faction includes a number of leftist points and numerous references to social justice, yet the demands made by CUP are more radical. This party was founded on the basis of local leftist movements which, under a joint banner, put forward candidates for local elections. This was the second time it decided to take part in an election to the Catalan parliament. This party questions not only the policy of the ruling parties in Catalonia and Spain but also the current shape of the democratic system, promoting various solutions of a widely-understood direct democracy and giving the citizens the right to decide on the most important matters via referenda. It also advocates the nationalization of the economy, especially the largest state-owned enterprises, and promotes radical ideas of green movements, including the demand to stop using nuclear energy (Governem-nos, 2015). Thus, it seems that it would be difficult to find a common ground in key matters in the political programmes of the far-left and centre Junts pel Si. Furthermore, CUP questions almost the entirety of the current political and economic system of the modern Catalonia, and thus also the actions of the ruling party being part of Junts pel Si. What is more, the differences between the two parties are also visible in the discourse on independence. CUP bases on the idea of *Paisos Catalans*, according to which the future Catalan state should include all territory with the Catalan cultural and language influences, including Valencia and the Balearic Islands. It also calls for the separation of Catalonia from Spain on the basis of a national referendum and establishing a sovereign Catalan state (Governem-nos, 2015). Meanwhile, Junts pel Si presented an 18-month programme for achieving independence, limiting itself (in spite of the fact that the supporters of the idea of *Paisos Catalans* are also members of this party) to the territory of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia.

However, it is not the matter of independence but other differences on the subjects of politics and economy that may make establishing a coalition between CUP and Junts pel Si extremely difficult. CUP built its position on negating the existing order, accusing the ruling party of creating a crisis and a number of problems. What is more, it continues to demand Prime Minister Artur Mas to be removed from power. It would be unexpected for Junts pel Si to agree to this demand and not to appoint one of its founding fathers and leaders to this function. However, the tension around Artur Mas has visibly grown in the past months. During the Summer 2015, the prosecutor's office revealed suspicions about a far-reaching corruption underground connected to CDC. Officials from this party, employed in many local bodies were accused of demanding donations for CDC funds in exchange for signing contracts for multi-million investments. The party did declare this money to the Tax Agency as donations, but the prosecutor's office revealed that they were made at the time the contracts were signed and regularly constituted 3% of their value. As a result of the ensuing scandal that reached the general public and the media under the name of "3% Scandal", detained were, among others: the CDC treasurer and the head of Catalan Public Procurement Office (Stasiński, 2015). The matter is further complicated by the fact that the first notification to the persecutor's office was made in 2013 by a representative of ECR (currently an allied party). Prime Minister Mas declared the investigation to be a revenge for his independence demands and an attempt to hinder the process of Catalonia gaining independence from Spain by means of an attack on the main political force that is able to do it. The Catalan leader must however deal with difficulties also in this respect. In late September (two days after the victory in the parliament election) Artur Mas was summoned to appear in court as a suspect in relation to the organization of a referendum on the independence of Catalonia in 2014. This action was considered an act of disloyalty to the government in Madrid (which considers Catalan independence referenda illegal) and misappropriation of public funds. The complaint was made after the referendum, that is a year before, by a Spanish persecutor general, who soon after handed in his resignation, suggesting being pressured by the Spanish authorities (*W niedzielę...*, 2015). However, this incident did not end the proceedings. In this issue however, Mas may count on the support of both allied politicians and residents of Catalonia. On the day of his hearing, a few thousand people gathered outside of the court building shouting: "We are all Mas" (*Wszyscy jesteśmy Masem*, 2015).

This support may however prove insufficient against the problems of the Prime Minister in forming his new government. Despite a joint vote on the acceptance of the November resolution of the Parliament on the independence of Catalonia,

the talks on forming a coalition between Junts pel Si and CUP are extremely difficult. In late November accusations were made by Junts pel Si sympathizers that CUP resorts to blackmail in respect to coalition, trying to force through its programme at all costs, which was clearly denied by the representatives of the latter party. CUP argues that it only presents those points that may become a common programme for both parties, that it is now ready to withdraw from its most radical points in order to advance the idea of an independent state, and that reaching an agreement is not that far away (*La PUP-CCC...*, 2015). At the same time, the party called for a “national debate” on 29 November as an attempt to discuss and reach a common stand on the issue of Catalan independence. In response, Junts pel Si also publicly announced the proposal made to CUP. It was based on creating a temporary government in which the President would maintain his basic competences, appoint Vice-President and create three government committees for economy, welfare state, and state and foreign affairs. All key decisions would be negotiated. Moreover, after nine months the Presidency would be subjected to an evaluation of its performance through a vote of confidence (*Comunicat*, 2015).

These declarations show that, despite seemingly extreme differences in the political programmes of the two parties, leaders of CUP and Junts pel Si try to consistently head for reaching an accord. The balance of power and the number of seats in truth do not give any of the parties a big enough leverage, so the politicians from both parties need to remember that the realization of the demands for independence (and the related expectations of the Catalans – voters of both parties) will not be possible without entering into an alliance. The process of reaching independence of Catalonia, due to a lower than expected election result remains completely dependent on the coalition between CUP and Junts pel Si.

This does not mean, however, that this coalition will be an easy one. It will consist of parties that recruit from radically opposing political environments – centre-right CDC, left ERC and now also communist CUP. In such a political arrangement, it would be difficult to avoid tensions in the government itself. The process of the transformation of Catalonia and the preparation for the proclamation of an independent state will be a process burdened by a high risk of instability. Even more so since the coalition will have to deal with the attacks on the part of the pro-Spain opposition and the attempts to suppress the Catalan independence aspirations by the central government – including the threat of suspension from office and criminal persecution. Maintaining – and, more importantly, the realization – of independence aspirations in this critical period shall require an unparalleled unity of all parties supporting this idea. So far, the course of the coalition negotiations shows that party leaders are fully aware of this fact. Programme

declarations and announcements mentioned above, made in response to reports on difficulties in negotiations, show that despite the seemingly impossible to overcome programme differences, there is a political will on both sides to enter into an alliance. The next several months will show whether this will be enough to govern jointly, to make an attempt of establishing a new state, and to realize the demands on separation from Spain, especially during these difficult times. The chance for an independent Catalonia hangs in the balance.

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