

Student's book

The History we live: A student's perspective on the 21st century

IES CASTILLA - Soria - Spain



CHAPTER 1:

Country and Politics

1. General information about Spain



Spain is a sovereign country located in the southwest of Europe, whose form of government is a parliamentary monarchy and is a member of the European Union. Its capital is Madrid, it has a population of more than 47 million inhabitants and an area of approximately 505,990 km². The official language is Spanish, although other languages such as Catalan, Galician and Basque are spoken. Its economy is based on tourism, industry and agriculture.

Geography

It is located on the Iberian Peninsula, in southwestern Europe, occupying 505,990 km². It has a large central plateau surrounded by several important mountains.

It also shares borders with Portugal, France, Andorra, and Africa, having territories there (Ceuta and Melilla), and further territories include the Canary and Balearic Islands.



Let's play Kahoot!



System of government

Spain operates as a parliamentary constitutional monarchy, established by the 1978 Constitution. The King serves as Head of State, whilst the President of the Government (Prime Minister) holds executive power. The bicameral parliament, known as the Cortes Generales, comprises the Congress of Deputies and the Senate.



The Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, with Felipe VI, Head of State

A parliamentary monarchy is a system of government where a monarch is the head of state, but a democratically elected parliament holds the real executive power and governs the country. The monarch's role is largely ceremonial and symbolic, with their power limited by a constitution

- Pedro Sánchez: prime minister from the political parties psoe since 2017
- Felipe VI: king of Spain since 2014

Even though these are the main charges, each city and autonomous community has a mayor that represent them.

Spanish Constitution of 1978

According to Article 1:

“Spain is defined as a social and democratic State under the rule of law, with the fundamental values of liberty, justice, equality, and political pluralism. National sovereignty resides in the Spanish people. The political system of the Spanish State is a parliamentary monarchy”.

Explanation of the Government (Title IV)

The functioning of the Government is described in Title IV, *“On the Government and the Administration.”*



Article 97 states that “the Government directs domestic and foreign policy, the administration and defense of the State, exercising executive and regulatory functions in accordance with the Constitution and the laws.”

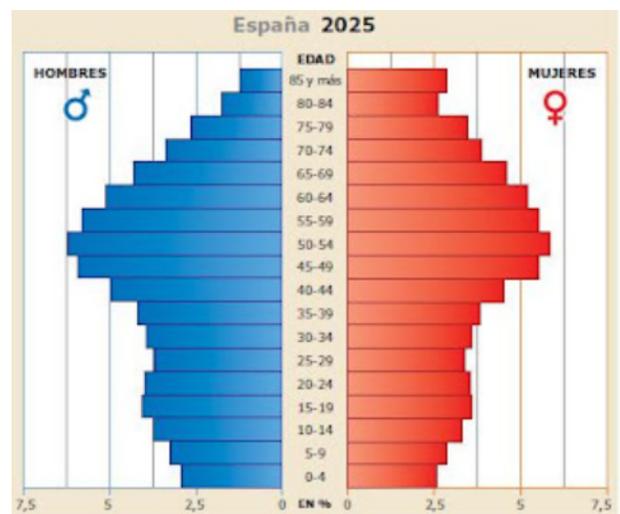
Article 98 establishes that the “Government is composed of the President, Vice-Presidents, and Ministers, who meet in the Council of Ministers and Delegated Committees. In the Spanish parliamentary monarchy, the King is the Head of State, and his acts require the countersignature of the Government to be valid”

Population

The population of Spain is 49,442,844 inhabitants as of October 1, 2025, its historical maximum.

This increase is mainly due to the growth of the population born abroad, according to data from the National Institute of Statistics (INE). 115,389 residents born outside of Spain

It is estimated that in Spain in 2027 there will be a population of 50 million inhabitants.



Currency

Euro banknotes and coins were introduced in Spain on 1 January 2002, after a transitional period of three years when the euro was the official currency but only existed as 'book money'. The dual circulation period, when both the Spanish peseta and the euro had legal tender status, ended on 28 February 2002.



Other interest facts

- Spain has 17 autonomous communities, each with its own parliament
- Four co-official languages: Spanish, Catalan, Basque, and Galician
- Third most visited country in the world
- Member of the EU, NATO, and the United Nation
- UNESCO sites: Spain ranks fifth in the world for the number of UNESCO World Heritage sites.
- African border: Spain is the only European country that shares a physical border with an African country, with the cities of Ceuta and Melilla located in North Africa.
- Healthcare: The public healthcare system is considered one of the best in the world, with a leading organ donation and transplantation system.
- Safety: It is one of the safest countries in Europe, with low crime rates.



Spanish co-official languages flags

Blocket activities:

2. Presidents

Pedro Sánchez



Pedro Sánchez was born in Madrid in 1972. He studied Economics and later completed a PhD. He has been a city councilor in Madrid, a member of the Spanish Parliament several times, and the secretary-general of the Socialist Party (PSOE). He became President of the Spanish Government in 2018 after a no-confidence vote and has governed since

then through different coalitions and parliamentary agreements.

Among the good things from his time in office, one of the most important is the increase of the minimum wage and other social policies, such as more scholarships and improvements for lower pensions.

Among the bad things, one widely criticized issue is his reliance on controversial agreements with pro-independence parties, which has created political tension and accusations of making too many concessions.

His political party also has a high rate of corruption, with investigations like in the Koldo case.

Mariano Rajoy (2011-2018)



He was born in 1955 in Santiago de Compostela. He graduated in law. Rajoy led Spain during the global financial crisis, implementing austerity measures and improving the Spanish economy. During his presidency, the peak of the independence in Catalonia took place, including the referendum of October 1, 2017, and the application of Article 155 of the Constitution. He stopped being the president because of a motion of censure due to a corruption scandal linked to his party, the PP.

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004-2011)



José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero was born on the 4 of august of 1960 in Valladolid and he was from PSOE, during his time as the president he increased the national debt by 80%, going from 40% to 70%, in addition he created the Historical Memory Law which aimed to recognise and honor the people who died during Spanish civil war and Franco's dictatorship.

Another thing he did was retire Spanish troops from Iraq which reduced the risk from the soldiers and aimed Spain's policy for a more independent policy, another of the things he did was legalizing same-sex marriage.

José María Aznar (1996-2004)



José María Aznar was born in Madrid in 1953. He studied Law and worked as a tax inspector before fully entering politics. He governed Spain from 1996 to 2004, during this time Spain experienced a strong economic growth and unemployment decreased, this was also when Spain met the requirements to join the EU helping stabilize the economy.

One of the facts that caused most trouble during his government was him supporting the Iraq war which caused massive public opposition, however the housing bubble started growing during his time governing due to easy credit and excessive construction.

The terrorist attack of March 11, 2004 in Madrid marked the final stretch of his government, in which the governor José María Aznar fueled practically until the last moment his idea about the authorship of ETA of the terrorist attack of 11M.

Let's play Kahoot!



3. Elections and Political Parties

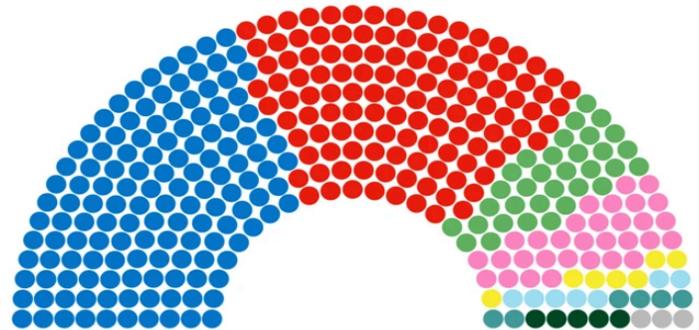
3.1 Elections

Right now in Spain the political parties are becoming radical. The main political parties are PP (was the most voted with **137 seats and ~ 33%**), PSOE (the second in the scale with **121 seats ~ 31-32%**), Vox (the third one with **33 seats ~ 12-13%**), Sumar (with **31 seats ~12%**). These date are from the 23 July 2023 elections, in which the PSOE won it.



Resultados de las elecciones generales, julio 2023

Congreso de Diputados, con 100% escrutado



Partido:	Esaños en 2023	2019
● Partido Popular (PP)	136	89
● PSOE	122	120
● Vox	33	52
● Sumar	31	38
● ERC	7	13
● Junts	7	8
● Bildu	6	5
● PNV	5	6
● Otros	3	19

Fuente: Ministerio del Interior • Participación del 70.4%

B B C

3.2 Political parties

Partido Popular (PP)

Founded in 1989, arising from the ancient Alianza Popular (AP), created by Manuel Fraga in 1976. Years later, José María Aznar turn the party to a centrist liberal-conservative profile.



In government, they combine pro-market policies with pragmatic social measures during crises (financial sector support or moderate anti-crisis policies).

The PP is aligned with **economic liberalism** generally favoring:

- Selective tax cuts (income tax, corporate tax).
- Support for entrepreneurship and private investment.
- Greater labor market flexibility, though less radical than some other European conservative parties.
- Deficit control and fiscal orthodoxy.

One of the PP's core ideological areas is the defense of Spain's system of autonomous communities, but with a more controlled approach. The party opposes expanding regional powers and takes a strong stance against the Catalan and Basque independence movements. Rather than seeking to eliminate the autonomous communities, the PP argues for regulating and limiting certain competencies.



In terms of current leadership and prominent representatives, **Alberto Núñez Feijóo** is the party's current leader, and **Isabel Díaz Ayuso** is one of its most visible figures, as president of the Community of Madrid.

Alongside these present-day references, the PP has also been associated with several major **corruption cases** in recent Spanish politics.

- **Gürtel plot:** A scheme in which the businessman Francisco Correa allegedly obtained public contracts in exchange for gifts and bribes. Companies involved in the network reportedly offered bribes to PP public officials to secure contracts in various administrations. Illicit profits were used to finance People's Party campaign events, and part of the money allegedly funded undeclared bonuses for some senior officials. This took place during Mariano Rajoy's political era.
- **Bárcenas case:** A case involving alleged irregular financing and a "B" (off-the-books) accounting system managed by Luis Bárcenas during the Rajoy period. Bárcenas served as the PP's treasurer for many years. He allegedly made irregular payments to former prime minister Mariano Rajoy, María Dolores de Cospedal, and a list of dozens of politicians and businessmen.

For more info visit: <https://www.pp.es/>



Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE)

Its ideas were influenced by European socialist thought. Since its early years, it has been closely linked to the UGT (General Union of Workers)—a trade union founded in 1888 that has traditionally been associated with the party. During the Bourbon Restoration, the PSOE had limited political representation, but it gradually grew.



Spain's first post-Franco government was led by Adolfo Suárez and the centrist UCD during the democratic transition. The PSOE first came to power later, in 1982, under Felipe González. Other PSOE prime ministers have included José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and Pedro Sánchez, who is Spain's current prime minister.

It is the political party that is currently governing Spain. It was created on May 2, 1879, in Madrid. PSOE is the abbreviation for Spanish Socialist Workers' Party.

One of the PSOE's definitionideological areas

- **Social Democracy and Progressivism:** The PSOE seeks a balance between the market economy and state intervention to guarantee social justice and well-being.
- **Social Justice and Equality:** It defends equal opportunities and the reduction of social and economic inequalities, prioritizing the collective interest over profit.
- **Feminism:** The party defines itself as feminist and promotes equality between men and women as a fundamental value.
- **Welfare State:** It supports the strengthening of essential public services such as healthcare, education, and social protection systems (pensions, unemployment benefits, etc.).
- **Full Democracy and Human Rights:** It promotes full democracy as a way of life, respect for human rights, and transparency in public administration.
- **Sustainable Development:** It advocates for sustainable and equitable economic development that meets the needs of the current and future population, with an ecological, economic, and social approach. It promotes the circular economy and sustainable mobility.

Main corruption cases:

- The brother of the president is in a process of investigation due to allegedly being beneficiary of his brother having an actual work in a town hall without working on them
- The wife of the president (Begoña Gómez), is being investigated for four crimes of embezzlement thanks to the president.

- The Koldo's case: It's a political corruption case where the right hand of the president and more ministers, for making contracts for their own benefit and stealing money from the public one.
- The state attorney general's case: The main judicial image is condemned for giving classified information to the PSOE to be used against the PP. This information was gained by him, using his judicial position in his favour.

This is his webpage: <https://www.psoe.es/>



VOX



Founded in 2013, by former members of the Partido Popular dissatisfied with PP's handling of national unity, terrorism, and territorial issues.

Vox is typically described as right-wing to far-right, depending on the domain and the analyst, Its core identity lies in nationalism, cultural conservatism, and strong centralism.

Economically, Vox defends a liberal, small-government approach, although economic policy is not its central ideological pillar. The current president is Santiago **Abascal**.

One of the Vox's main ideas:

- Drastically reduced immigration.
- Deportation of irregular migrants.
- Opposition to refugee quotas assigned by the EU.
- Support for strict border control, especially in Ceuta and Melilla)



Main corruption cases:

- Vox has mainly faced **controversies over party financing** rather than large bribery networks: Spain's **Court of Auditors** fined the party in **2025** for **very serious breaches** involving **unidentified cash donations (2018–2020)** and later imposed another fine linked to **prohibited/earmarked donations (2020)**. The **Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office** opened inquiries but **closed the case in 2025**, arguing the conduct had already been dealt with through the Court of Auditors' administrative sanctions. There have also been **public allegations by former Vox officials in the Balearic Islands** about pressure to divert parliamentary-group funds toward the party and the **Disenso Foundation**, which Vox denies and which has led to political calls for further scrutiny. This is his webpage: <https://www.voxespana.es/>



SUMAR

SUMAR is a **left-wing** political platform/electoral alliance led by **Yolanda Díaz** (Spain's Second Deputy Prime Minister and Labour Minister). It was **provisionally registered as an association on 28 March 2022**, and later **registered as a political party in May 2023**, before being set up as an **electoral coalition for the 2023 general election**.

Sumar



Today, Sumar is part of the **national coalition government** because it governs through an agreement with the **PSOE**. It is **not simply “the same party as Podemos with a new name”**: Sumar was created as a broader umbrella on the left (often described as the successor space to *Unidas Podemos*), and **Podemos negotiated to run jointly with Sumar for the 2023 election**, even though relations later deteriorated. In general terms, its programme is **progressive** and

focuses on **feminism**, the **expansion of rights and freedoms**, and **labour reforms** such as **reducing working hours/working week**, alongside left-leaning economic policies that strengthen the welfare state and public services; on migration, it tends to defend a **rights-based and humanitarian approach**, rather than “open borders” in a literal sense. Is the main political party from far-left.

This is his webpage: <https://movimientosumar.es/tema/actualidad/>

Podemos

PODEMOS is a left-wing to far-left Spanish political party that emerged from the anti-austerity and “15-M” protest climate of the early 2010s. It was launched in Madrid on 16

PODEMOS



January 2014, with Pablo Iglesias as its best-known founder and first leader. Today, the party is led by **Ione Belarra** (secretary-general since 2021 and re-ratified by members in 2025). In the 2023 general election, Podemos ran within the broader Sumar electoral coalition, but in December 2023 its MPs left the Sumar parliamentary group and moved to the Mixed Group (Grupo Mixto), positioning Podemos more independently from the PSOE–Sumar government.

In general terms, Podemos' main ideas include social justice and anti-austerity policies, strengthening public services and the welfare state, feminism and equality, housing and labour rights (including proposals to reduce working time), and broader democratic reforms (often framed as fighting corruption and "political privileges").

Junts per Catalunya

Junts is a party from the far right whose main politics are only for Catalunya with an independentist position and with a liberal-conservist form of thinking.



It was founded in 2020 by Charles Puigdemont.

Their main ideas:

- Independence of Catalonia.
- Financial and tax autonomy.
- Housing and education policies for Catalonia.
- Expel illegal immigrants.

Current figures :

Charles Puigdemont(The president)



Miriam Nogueras(The vicepresident)



The most important events that involved Junts

- They made an illegal referendum to vote and get independent from Spain. The referendum wasn't legal so it isn't valid. Puigdemont needed to get out of Spain or go to prison. Nowadays the PSOE, through pardons, removed all criminal responsibility from Puigdemont.
- They allied with PSOE to gain more benefits for Catalonia than for the other communities.

- Nowadays they get temporarily out of the pact with PSOE as a temporary protest to get more benefits for Catalonia and due to the open frontiers politics of PSOE “that affected the security” from their point of view.

Esquerra republicana de Catalunya

Esquerra is a Political Party from Catalunya. They are independentists in a more social democratic way. It was founded in 1931 in the second Republic and they were part of the fight against Franco.



Their main ideas:

- Independence of Catalonia.
- Social Justice and Solidarity.
- Equality
- Republicanism (No king)

Current figures :

- Oriol Junqueras (The president)
- Gabriel Rufián (The representative in the congress)



The most important events that involved Esquerra

- They also participated in the illegal referendum to vote and get independent from Spain in 2017. Oriol Junqueras was imprisoned and later forgiven by the government of Pedro Sánchez

KAHOOT

<https://create.kahoot.it/share/spain-politics/ecd3fce9-136c-4429-838a-c468e95ca2b8>

4. Political affairs and scandal

11 March 2004: Spain experienced the deadliest terrorist attacks in its history. A series of ten simultaneous explosions on four trains near Madrid. They killed 193 people.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwM5QIvVa9Y&list=RDWwM5QIvVa9Y&start_radio=1

Song inspired in this day, it tells a love that could never be because of this tragedy.

30 July 2005: Aprobation of same sex marriage, Spain was the first country in the European Union to approve it, with the law coming into effect on July 3. It was passed under the administration of Zapatero also granted same-sex couples the right to adopt.



2008: Start of the economic crisis. It started primarily by a real state bubble in the US, the proliferation of subprime mortgages and the deregulation of the financial sector



15 May 2011: Strike against corruption, inequality and crisis. Also known as the strike of the outraged, protested against the economic crisis, corruption and inequalities, it concluded with people camping in several Spanish cities.



19 June 2014: Felipe VI was proclaimed the new king of Spain in the General Courts. The ceremony was intended to signify a break from the past.



27 October 2017: Declaration of independence of Catalunya, the Catalan Parliament passed a resolution declaring the establishment of an independent catalan republic.



13 March 2020: COVID 19 pandemic started in Spain and took drastic measurements, this day all the spanish habitants were confined

The OMS warned that Europe had become the new epicenter of the pandemic, and several communities closed businesses and restricted movement before national orders. This caused a social and economic impact. Finally, a state of emergency was officially declared, and a strict lockdown began for the entire population.



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IMAGES

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