

Topic page:

Spain

Span. *España* **äspä'nyä**, officially Kingdom of Spain, constitutional monarchy (2005 est. pop. 40,341,000), 194,884 sq mi (504,750 sq km), including the Balearic and Canary islands, SW Europe. It consists of the Spanish mainland (190,190 sq mi/492,592 sq km), which occupies the major part of the Iberian Peninsula; of the [Balearic Islands](#) in the Mediterranean Sea; and of the [Canary Islands](#) in the Atlantic Ocean.

Land

Administratively, Spain is divided into 17 autonomous communities based on regional geography and history and in large part corresponding to the old Christian and Moorish kingdoms of Spain. The communities are subdivided into 50 provinces that predate the establishment of regional autonomy beginning in the late 1970s. The chief cities, other than Madrid, are [Burgos](#), [Valladolid](#), [León](#), [Zamora](#), and [Salamanca](#) in Castile-León; [Toledo](#) in Castile-La Mancha; and [Badajoz](#) in Extremadura.

The center of Spain forms a vast plateau (Span. *Meseta Central*) extending from the Cantabrian Mts. in the north to the Sierra Morena in the south and from the Portuguese border in the west to the low ranges that separate the plateau from the Mediterranean coast in the east. It is traversed from west to east by mountain chains—notably the Sierra de Guadarrama—and the valleys of the Douro (Duero), the Tagus, and Guadiana rivers. Except for some fertile valleys, the central plateau is arid and thinly populated; wheat growing, viticulture, and sheep raising are the principal rural activities. The plateau comprises [Castile-León](#), [Castile-La Mancha](#), and Madrid, which form the heart of Spain, and [Extremadura](#), which is in the west.

To the northeast of the central plateau is the broad valley of the Ebro, which traverses [Aragón](#) and flows into the Mediterranean. Aragón has [Zaragoza](#) as its chief city; it is historically and geographically connected with [Catalonia](#), which occupies the Mediterranean coast from the French border to the mouth of the Ebro. [Barcelona](#), the chief Catalan city, is the largest port and the second largest city of Spain.

The W Pyrenees and the northern coast, paralleled by the Cantabrian Mts., are occupied by [Navarre](#), with the city of [Pamplona](#); the [Basque Country](#), with the ports of [Bilbao](#) and [San Sebastián](#); [Santander](#); and [Asturias](#), with [Oviedo](#) and the port of [Gijón](#). The extreme northwestern section, occupied by [Galicia](#), has a deeply indented coast and the excellent ports of [A Coruña](#), [Ferrol](#), and [Vigo](#).

Along the eastern coast, S of Catalonia, extend the regions of [Valencia](#) and [Murcia](#), named after their chief cities. The Balearic Islands, with [Palma](#) as their capital, are off the coast of Valencia. The southernmost part of Spain, S of the Sierra Morena, is [Andalusia](#); it is crossed by the fertile Guadalquivir valley. The chief cities of Andalusia are [Seville](#), [Córdoba](#), and [Granada](#), the Mediterranean port of [Málaga](#), and the Atlantic port of [Cádiz](#). The [Sierra Nevada](#), rising from the Mediterranean coast, has the highest peak (Mulhacén, 11,411 ft/3,478 m) in continental Spain. Spanish summers are often very hot, but winters vary sharply, being mild in coastal areas and colder inland.

People

The Spanish people display great regional diversity. Separatist tendencies remain particularly strong among the Catalans and the Basques. Castilian is the standard Spanish language, but Catalan (akin to Provençal), Galician (akin to Portuguese), and Basque, unrelated to any other language, are still spoken and written extensively in their respective districts. Roman Catholicism was the official religion until 1978, but its role in Spanish public and private life has declined. There is a sizable Muslim minority (about 1 million), largely consisting of North African immigrants.

Economy

Long a largely agricultural country, Spain produces large crops of wheat, barley, vegetables, tomatoes, olives, sugar beets, citrus fruit, grapes, and cork. Spain is the world's largest producer of olive oil and Europe's largest producer of lemons,

oranges, and strawberries. The best-known wine regions are those of [Rioja](#), in the upper Ebro valley, and of [Málaga](#) and [Jerez de la Frontera](#), in Andalusia. Cattle, pigs, and poultry are raised. Agriculture is handicapped in many places by lack of mechanization, by insufficient irrigation, and by soil exhaustion and erosion.

The major industries produce textiles and apparel, foods and beverages, metals and metal products, chemicals, ships, automobiles, machine tools, clay and refractory products, footwear, pharmaceuticals, and medical equipment. Industries are concentrated chiefly in the Madrid region; in Valladolid; in Catalonia, which has large textile, automotive parts, and electronics manufactures; in Valencia; and in Asturias and the Basque Country, where the rich mineral resources of the Cantabrian Mts. (iron, coal, and zinc) are exploited. Copper is mined extensively at [Río Tinto](#); other mineral resources include lead, uranium, silver, tin, and mercury. Petroleum is found near Burgos. Fishing, notably for sardines, tuna, cod, and anchovies, is an important source of livelihood, especially on the Atlantic coast, and fish canning is a major industry. Tourism is Spain's greatest source of income.

Most Spanish railroads, unlike those of the rest of Western Europe, use broad-gauged tracks, although some regional systems consist of narrow-gauge railways. In 1992 a high-speed standard-gauge railway connecting Madrid and Seville began operation.

Spain has made great economic progress in recent decades, but it still lags behind most of Western Europe. Though industry has grown considerably since the 1950s, the country still has a large trade imbalance. Spain's greatest trade is with France, Germany, Italy, and Great Britain. Among the leading exports are machinery; motor vehicles; fruit, wine, and other food products; and pharmaceuticals. Major imports include machinery and equipment, fuels, chemicals, manufactured goods, foodstuffs, and medical instruments.

Government

Spain is a constitutional monarchy governed under the constitution of 1978. The hereditary monarch, who is the head of state, may ratify laws, dissolve the legislature, and propose candidates for the office of prime minister; he is also head of the armed forces. The prime minister (*presidente*) is the head of government. The king proposes the prime minister, who must be approved by the legislature. Spain has a bicameral legislature, the Cortes (*Las Cortes Generales*), or National Assembly. Members of the 350-seat Congress of Deputies are elected by popular vote. Of the 259 members of the Senate, 208 are directly elected, while 51 are appointed by regional legislatures. All legislators serve four-year terms. Administratively, the country is divided into 17 regions (autonomous communities) and 2 autonomous cities (Ceuta and Melilla). Each of the autonomous communities has its own parliament and regional government.

History

Spain before the Muslim Conquest

Civilization in Spain dates back to the Stone Age. The [Basques](#) may be descended from the prehistoric humans whose art has been preserved in the caves at Altamira. They antedated the [Iberians](#), who mixed with Celtic invaders at an early period. Because of its mineral and agricultural wealth and its position guarding the Strait of Gibraltar, Spain was known to the Mediterranean peoples from very early times. The Phoenicians passed through the strait and established (9th cent. B.C.) colonies in Andalusia, notably at Cádiz and Tartessus (possibly the biblical [Tarshish](#)). Later the Carthaginians settled on the east coast and in the Balearic Islands, where Greek colonies also sprang up. In the 3d cent. B.C., the Carthaginians under [Hamilcar Barca](#) began to conquer most of the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearics and established [Cartagena](#) as capital.

The Roman victory over Hannibal in the second of the [Punic Wars](#) (218–201 B.C.) resulted in the expulsion of the Carthaginians. The Romans conquered E and S Spain, but met strong resistance elsewhere, notably in the north. The fall (133 B.C.) of [Numantia](#) marked the end of organized resistance, and by the 1st cent. A.D. Roman control was virtually complete. Except for the [Basques](#), the Iberian population became thoroughly romanized, perhaps more so than any subject population. Roman rule brought political unity, law, and economic prosperity. Christianity was introduced early; St. Paul is supposed to have visited Spain, and St. James the Greater is its apostolic patron. Natives of Spain contributed increasingly to both pagan and Christian literature in Latin. Among them were Seneca, Martial, and Quintilian.

In A.D. 409, Spain was overrun by the first wave of Germanic invaders, the [Suevi](#) and the [Vandals](#). They were followed by the [Visigoths](#), who forced the Vandals to emigrate into Africa and established (419) their kingdom in Spain and S Gaul, with Toulouse as capital. The victory (507) of the Franks under Clovis over [Alaric II](#) at Vouillé resulted in the loss by the Visigoths of most of Gaul; in the Iberian Peninsula, Belisarius temporarily reconquered (554) S Spain for the Byzantine Empire; however, the Visigoths soon regained S Spain and in 585 also conquered the kingdom of the Suevi in Galicia. The Visigothic capital after the loss of Toulouse was at Toledo. The Germanic Visigoths, who adhered to Arianism until the late 6th cent., and the Catholic, romanized native population lived side by side under two separate codes of law (see [Germanic laws](#)); fusion of the two elements was very slow.

King [Recceswinth](#) imposed (c.654) a common law on all his subjects. His code remained the basis of medieval Spanish law. Learning was cultivated almost exclusively by the Roman Catholic clergy, among whom [Orosius](#) and St. Leander and his brother, St. [Isidore of Seville](#), were outstanding. Byzantine cultural influence was strong, but was probably less important than that of the [Jews](#), who had settled in Spain in large numbers, and were persecuted after 600. Politically, the Visigothic kings were weak; the clergy, meeting in councils at Toledo, acquired secular power. Visigothic society was rent by a clash of Germanic, Hispano-Roman, and Jewish influences. When, in 711, a Muslim Berber army under [Tarik ibn Ziyad](#) crossed the Strait of Gibraltar into Spain, [Roderick](#), the last Visigothic king, was defeated, and his kingdom collapsed.

Muslim Spain and the Christian Reconquest

The [Moors](#), as the Berber conquerors were called, soon conquered the entire peninsula except for Asturias and the Basque Country. Córdoba became the capital of the emir, who governed in the name of the Baghdad caliph. In 756, however, [Abd ar-Rahman I](#), scion of the [Umayyad](#) dynasty, established an independent emirate. This Muslim state, which reached its greatest splendor under [Abd ar-Rahman III](#), who set up the Western caliphate, or caliphate of Córdoba, included all but northernmost Spain. In the northeast, [Charlemagne](#) created (778) the Spanish March, out of which grew the county of Barcelona (i.e., Catalonia). In the W Pyrenees, the Basques held out against both Frankish and Moorish attacks and eventually united in the kingdom of Navarre.

Asturias, the only remnant of Visigothic Spain, became the focus of the Christian reconquest. The rulers of Asturias, who were descended from the semilegendary [Pelayo](#), conquered large territories in NW Spain and consolidated them with Asturias as the kingdom of León. Navarre, under a branch of the Asturian line, reached its greatest prominence under [Sancho III](#) (1000–1035), who also controlled Aragón and Castile. His state split at his death into three kingdoms: Navarre, which soon lost its importance; Aragón, which united (1137) with Barcelona (see [Aragón, house of](#)); and Castile, which was eventually united with León (1230) under Ferdinand III and with Aragón (1479) under Isabella I and Ferdinand V. This long process of unification was accomplished by marriage and inheritance as well as by warfare among the Christian kings; it was accompanied by the expansion of the Christian kingdoms at the expense of the Moors.

The Umayyad empire had broken up early in the 11th cent. into a number of petty kingdoms or emirates. The [Abbadids](#) of Córdoba were the most important of these dynasties. They called in the [Almoravids](#) from Africa to aid them against Alfonso VI of Castile. As a result, the Almoravids took over Moorish Spain, but they in turn were replaced (c.1174) by the [Almohads](#), another Berber dynasty. In the battle of Navas de Tolosa (1212), a turning point in Spanish history, the Almohads were defeated by Alfonso VIII of Castile, whose successors conquered most of Andalusia. Little more than the kingdom of Granada remained in Moorish hands; it held out until its conquest by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492.

Disunity among the Moors facilitated the Christian reconquest. However, the states of Christian Spain were also frequently engaged in bloody rivalry, and the Christian kings were in almost continuous conflict with the powerful nobles. Alliances between Muslim and Christian princes were not rare, and the Christian reconquest was a spasmodic, not a continuous, process. A major reason for the Christian victory was that Christian Spain was in a stage of dynamic expansion and religious enthusiasm while Moorish Spain, having attained a high degree of civilization and material prosperity, had lost its military vigor and religious zeal. In the Moorish cities Muslims, Jews, and Christians (see [Mozarabs](#)) lived side by side in relative harmony and mutual tolerance. Their excellent artisans and industries were famous throughout Europe, and their commerce prospered.

Agriculture, helped by extensive irrigation systems, was productive under the Moors. To the Christian nobles of N Spain, particularly of Castile and León, the flourishing cities and countryside to the south were a constant temptation. The united state of Aragón and Catalonia, commercially more prosperous than the other Christian kingdoms, was less active in the reconquest and was more concerned with its Mediterranean empire—the Balearics (which for a time formed the separate kingdom of [Majorca](#)), Sardinia, Sicily, and Greece. Portugal also, after winning its independence in the 12th cent., developed as an Atlantic sea power and took part only in local campaigns against the Moors. It was thus under Castilian leadership that the reconquest was completed, and it was the Castilian nobility that formed the nucleus of the class of feudal magnates—the *grandees*—who were the ruling class of Spain for centuries after the reconquest. The fall of Granada (1492) made Ferdinand V (see [Ferdinand II of Aragón](#)) and [Isabella I](#) rulers of all Spain. (For a list of the rulers of Spain from Ferdinand and Isabella to the present, see the table entitled [Rulers of Spain since 1474](#))

In the same year, in their zeal to achieve religious unity, the Catholic rulers expelled the Jews from Spain. Until 1492 the Jews and the Muslims had been allowed to live in reconquered territory. From the time of the Spanish [Inquisition](#) (1478), however, attempts at conversion were made more forcibly, often including confiscation of property, torture, or murder, usually by *auto-da-fé*. The Inquisition was not restricted to Jews and Moors, and even those who did convert were often persecuted. The expulsion of the Jews deprived Spain of part of its most useful and active population. Many went to the Levant, to the Americas, and to the Netherlands, where their skills, capital, and commercial connections benefited their hosts. The *Mudéjares*, as the Muslims in reconquered Spain were called, were not immediately expelled, but after an uprising they were forcibly converted (1502) to Christianity. Many of the [Moriscos](#) [Christian Moors] secretly adhered to Islam. After many persecutions, they were finally expelled in 1609.

In spite of the expulsion of 1492, a large population of Christian converts remained in Spain and, as members of the educated elite, continued to make significant contributions to Spanish culture. The Jewish-Moorish legacy to Spain and to Western Europe is immense. Moorish architecture (see [Islamic art and architecture](#)) has left a deep imprint on Spain; its most famous example is the [Alhambra](#) of Granada. Arabic scholars such as [Averroës](#) and Jewish scholars such as [Maimonides](#) had a major share in the development of Christian scholasticism. Material legacies of Moorish Spain included the great steel industry of Toledo, the silk industry of Granada, the leather industry of Córdoba, and the intensive plantations of rice and citrus trees.

By fostering the exploitation of central Spain for sheep grazing, Ferdinand and Isabella unwittingly prepared the ruin of much land that had been fruitful under the Moors. The major economic revolution that occurred during their reign was, however, the discovery (1492) of America by Columbus. By the Treaty of [Tordesillas](#) (1494), Spain and Portugal divided the world into two spheres of influence. Almost all of South America, Central America, S North America, and the Philippines were added to the Spanish world empire in the 16th cent. Gold and silver, the primary objectives of the conquistadores, flowed into Spain in fabulous quantities. Spain in the 16th cent. (the Golden Century) was the first power of the world, with an empire "on which the sun never set," with fleets on every sea, and with a brilliant cultural, artistic, and intellectual life. In the [Italian Wars](#) (1494–1559), Spain triumphed over its chief rival, France, and added Naples (see [Naples, kingdom of](#)) and the duchy of [Milan](#) to its dependencies.

The Golden Age

When Charles I (elected Holy Roman emperor in 1519 as [Charles V](#)), first of the [Hapsburg](#) kings (who ruled Spain from 1516 to 1700), succeeded Ferdinand V, Spain was still divided into separate kingdoms and principalities, united chiefly in the person of a common ruler. Each kingdom had its separate [Cortes](#) and its own customary law. The cities, which had retained their individuality since Roman times, enjoyed great privileges and independence. Charles had to be acknowledged by each individual Cortes at his accession. Castile was nominally ruled jointly by Charles and his mother, [Joanna](#), until Joanna's death. The centralizing policies of Charles's predecessors had curtailed some of the local powers, particularly in Castile, but Charles's efforts to continue the centralizing process and his fiscal policies resulted in an uprising of the cities—the war of the *comunidades* (see [comuneros](#))—in 1520–21. The rising was suppressed, and its leader, [Padilla](#), was executed.

By the time Charles abdicated (1556) in Spain in favor of his son [Philip II](#), Spain was on its way to becoming a centralized and absolute monarchy. Under Philip II the process was continued, although Catalonia, Navarre, Aragón, Valencia, and the Basque Country still maintained a considerable degree of autonomy. During the 16th cent. the church enlarged its already dominant position in Spanish life. The Spanish Inquisition, organized by Tomás de [Torquemada](#) in the late 15th cent., reached its greatest power in the 16th cent. under Philip. At the same time the Counter Reformation was advanced in Spain by St. [Ignatius of Loyola](#), St. Theresa of Ávila, and St. [John of the Cross](#).

With Spain, Philip had also inherited Sicily, Naples, Sardinia, Milan, Franche-Comté, the Netherlands, and all the Spanish colonies. His religious policies, fiscal demands, and high-handed rule precipitated the Dutch struggle for independence (see the [Netherlands](#)). The northern provinces of the Netherlands shook off the Spanish yoke, but the southern provinces (see [Netherlands, Austrian and Spanish](#)) were again subjugated. Spanish military power, which achieved its greatest successes against France, leading to the Treaty of [Cateau-Cambrésis](#) (1559), and in the naval victory at [Lepanto](#) over the Turks (1571), was on the decline. As the champion of Catholicism in Europe, Spain unsuccessfully intervened in the French Wars of Religion by sending an army to support the [League](#) against Henry IV. The rivalry on the seas between Spain and England culminated in the attempted conquest of England by the Spanish [Armada](#) (1588); its complete failure at immense cost weakened Spain for a decade.

The Decline of Spain

Under Philip II's successors, [Philip III](#) and [Philip IV](#), Spain was drawn into the [Thirty Years War](#) (1618–48), prolonged by war with France until 1659. The peace treaties (see [Westphalia, Peace of](#); [Pyrenees, Peace of the](#)) made France the leading power of continental Europe. The wars of Louis XIV of France (see [Dutch Wars](#)³; [Devolution, War of](#); [Grand Alliance, War of the](#)) cost Spain further territories and military prestige. Portugal, united with Spain by Philip II in 1580, rebelled and regained its independence in 1640. In the same year a serious revolt began in Catalonia over the province's autonomous rights. In the end (1659) the Catalans retained most of their privileges.

The political weakness of Spain was complicated by the absence of a direct heir to [Charles II](#), who succeeded Philip IV in 1665. The chief claimants to the succession were Louis XIV of France and Archduke Charles of Austria (later Holy Roman Emperor [Charles VI](#)). The pro-French party at the Spanish court ultimately won out when Charles II designated Louis XIV's grandson, Philip (later [Philip V](#) of Spain), as successor. The War of the [Spanish Succession](#) (1701–14) broke out upon Charles's death. The Peace of Utrecht (see [Utrecht, Peace of](#)) confirmed Philip V on the Spanish throne, but it transferred the Spanish Netherlands, Milan, Naples, and Sardinia to Austria and Sicily to Savoy. Another result of the war was that Catalonia, Valencia, and Aragón, which had opposed Philip, lost their political autonomy.

Attempts to recover the lost possessions and to revive Spanish prestige were fostered by Philip's ambitious queen, [Elizabeth Farnese](#), and his chief minister, [Alberoni](#). These attempts merely led (1718) to the formation of the [Quadruple Alliance](#), which in 1720 imposed upon Spain a but slightly more favorable settlement in Italy. Spain under its [Bourbon](#) kings came increasingly under French influence after the [Family Compact](#) of 1733 and its successors.

With the support of France, Spain regained (1735) Naples and Sicily in the War of the [Polish Succession](#). These two kingdoms, however, were no longer administered by Spanish viceroys but were ruled independently by a cadet branch of the Spanish Bourbons. In the Treaty of Paris of 1763 (see under [Paris, Treaty of](#)), Spain lost [Florida](#) to Britain but was compensated with [Louisiana](#) by France. In the American Revolution, Spain sided with the United States and France and recovered Florida in the Treaty of Paris of 1783. These, however, were short-lived successes.

The economy of Spain had steadily deteriorated since the reign of Philip II. The influx of precious metal had long ceased, and little of it remained in Spain. The colonization of the vast Spanish Empire and the many costly wars had impoverished the country. Inflation led landowners to increase their holdings. The population had greatly increased and the peasants lived in misery, some of them on the inefficiently run estates of the [grandees](#). The court and government had decayed in an atmosphere of bigotry, incompetence, and corruption. The church, exhausted by the struggle between the popes and the kings, had largely ceased its political role as a constructive force and was using its influence for the perpetuation of the existing order. The towering artistic and intellectual achievements of the 16th cent. had given way, by the mid-18th cent., to meaningless convention.

Under Philip V's successors, [Ferdinand VI](#) and [Charles III](#), the ministers [Ensenada](#) and [Floridablanca](#) made basic reforms. Internal transportation was improved. Agricultural colonies were formed for better utilization of the land. The colonial trade was freed of centuries-old regulations and restrictions. Trade and commerce, especially in [Cádiz](#) and [Barcelona](#), were stimulated. The Jesuits were expelled from Spain in 1767 as part of an effort to subordinate church to state. [Charles IV](#), who succeeded Charles III, was an incompetent monarch, dominated by his wife, [María Luisa](#), and their favorite, the able but unscrupulous [Godoy](#).

Drawn into the [French Revolutionary Wars](#) and the Wars of [Napoleon I](#), Spain suffered its greatest humiliation in 1808 with the successive abdications of Charles and his son, [Ferdinand VII](#), the installation of Joseph Bonaparte (see under [Bonaparte](#), family) on the Spanish throne, and the occupation of the country by French troops. However, the rigor and heroism displayed by the common people of Spain in their struggle against the conqueror (see [Peninsular War](#)) was an important factor in the eventual downfall of Napoleon. By 1814 the Spanish resistance forces and the British under Wellington had expelled the French, and Ferdinand VII was restored under a constitution drawn up in 1812 at [Cádiz](#) by the first national Cortes of Spain. The constitution restricted the power of the Spanish monarch and did away with the special representation of the nobility and the church in parliament. It also formally ended the Inquisition.

Monarchists and Republicans

The nationalist and liberal upsurge that swept over Spain and its overseas empire during the Peninsular War was focused, somewhat incomprehensibly, on the person of Ferdinand VII. After his restoration Ferdinand, through his reactionary measures, drove the forces that had placed him on the throne into opposition. At home, the liberal and radical groups attacked the very institution of the monarchy; overseas, they brought about the independence of the Latin American nations. By 1825 all Latin America except several territories in the West Indies had gained independence. In Spain itself, Ferdinand's refusal to honor the 1812 constitution led to the revolution of 1820, put down in 1823 by French troops acting for the Holy Alliance.

Shortly before his death (1833), Ferdinand altered the law of succession in favor of his daughter, [Isabella II](#), and to the detriment of his brother, Don [Carlos](#). Isabella succeeded under the regency of her mother, [Maria Christina](#), but her succession was contested by the [Carlists](#) in a bitter war that raged until 1839. Her turbulent reign (1833-68) was marked by a series of uprisings, military coups, new constitutions, and dictatorships and ended with her abdication. Politics was largely a matter of personalities—among these [Espartero](#), [Narváez](#), [Prim](#), and [O'Donnell](#) were outstanding—but factions generally fell into three groups: the extreme reactionaries, who included the Carlists; the moderates and progressives, who theoretically favored a constitutional monarchy, but who tended to rule dictatorially when they came into power; and the republicans. The Catalan and Basque separatists favored whichever party happened to oppose the central government.

After the abdication (1868) of Isabella, the Cortes set up a constitutional monarchy and chose [Amadeus](#), duke of Aosta, as king. Unable to obtain the cooperation of all factions, Amadeus abdicated in 1873. The short-lived first Spanish republic (1873-74) was torn by another Carlist War (1872-76) and by the cantonalist movement in the south, notably in [Cartagena](#), which attempted to establish authorities independent of the central government. The Bourbon [Alfonso XII](#), son of Isabella, was placed on the throne by a coalition of moderate parties, and in 1876 a new constitution was adopted.

By the end of the 19th cent. the Socialist and Anarcho-Syndicalist parties began to gain a wide following among the lower classes, particularly in industrial Catalonia, rural Andalusia, and in the mining districts of Asturias. Strikes and uprisings,

usually suppressed with great brutality, became characteristic features of early-20th-century Spain. The church, which was aligned with the landowners, aroused often violent anticlerical feeling among the revolutionary, and even among liberal, elements. The loss of most of the remainder of the Spanish Empire in the [Spanish-American War](#) (1898) prompted a period of self-examination that produced a cultural renaissance.

Under Alfonso XIII (reigned 1886–1931), Spain remained neutral in World War I. But wartime trade had increased industrialists' profits. Great social and economic unrest marked the postwar period. Colonial rebellions in Morocco were a recurring problem. In 1923 a new outbreak in Catalonia was suppressed and resulted in the establishment of a military dictatorship under [Primo de Rivera](#). Widespread opposition forced Primo de Rivera's resignation in 1930; in 1931, after a great republican victory in municipal elections, Alfonso XIII was deposed and the second republic established. Under the new president, the moderate liberal [Alcalá Zamora](#), the regime instituted progressive reforms, including the distribution of church property, but met widespread opposition from rightist groups and also from the extreme left. There were serious separatist and Anarcho-Syndicalist uprisings in Catalonia. The government shifted to the right after the 1933 elections, and in 1934 a miners' uprising in the Asturias was put down with much bloodshed.

Civil War

The Popular Front (republicans, Socialists, Communists, and syndicalists) was victorious in the national elections of 1936. Before the government under Manuel [Azaña](#) had time to carry out its program, a military rebellion precipitated the great [Spanish civil war](#) of 1936–39. The Insurgents, or Nationalists, who soon came under the leadership of Gen. Francisco [Franco](#), embraced most conservative groups, notably the monarchists, the Carlists, most of the army officers, the clericalists, the landowners and industrialists, and the fascist [Falange](#) (Nationalist Front). Their forces received the immediate military aid of Germany and Italy. The Loyalists were supported by the Popular Front parties and by the nationalists in Catalonia and the Basque Country, which had at last been granted autonomy.

Because of the nonintervention policy of Britain and France, the Loyalists received virtually no outside support except for an international brigade and some meager aid from the USSR. Despite military inferiority and bloody internal divisions, the Loyalists made a remarkably determined stand, particularly in central Spain. By the beginning of 1938, however, the territory held by the Loyalists had shrunk drastically, and with the fall (Jan., 1939) of Barcelona the war was almost over. Madrid surrendered in Mar., 1939. The Loyalist government and many thousands of refugees fled into France, and the government of Franco was soon recognized by all major powers except the USSR.

Spain under Franco

A dictatorship was set up under Franco. The church was restored to its property and its favored position, although there was much friction between church and state. The Falange was made the sole legal party, and the leftist opposition was energetically suppressed. The Cortes and Catalan and Basque autonomy were abolished. Although it gave aid to the Axis, Spain remained a nonbelligerent in World War II. The Cortes was reestablished in 1942. The United Nations, refusing to recognize the constitutionality of the Franco regime, urged its members in 1946 to break diplomatic relations with Spain; this resolution was not rescinded until 1950. Spain entered the United Nations in 1955. An agreement with the United States in 1953 provided for U.S. bases in Spain and for economic and military aid.

In 1956, Spanish Morocco became part of the independent state of Morocco; in 1968, Spanish Equatorial Guinea became independent; in 1969 Ifni was ceded to Morocco; and in 1976 Spanish Sahara was transferred to Morocco and Mauritania. In 1968 Spain closed its frontier with the British colony of Gibraltar, over which Spain has long claimed sovereignty. The border was reopened in 1985, and in 1987 Spain and Great Britain forged an agreement that would have allowed joint use of the Gibraltar airport, but Gibraltar rejected the agreement.

Political unrest, partly over the problem of succession to the Franco regime, became increasingly evident in the 1950s, and at the start of the 1960s the church, which had long been silent, began to voice some opposition to aspects of the dictatorship. In 1962 a series of strikes, beginning in the coal fields of Asturias, gave indication of widespread discontent. Student demonstrations also occurred. Basque separatism posed another serious problem for the regime.

A new organic law (constitution) was announced by Franco in 1966. It separated the posts of head of government and chief of state, provided for direct election of about one quarter of the members of the Cortes, gave married women the vote, made religious freedom a legal right, and ended Falange control of labor unions. The forming of new political parties was still discouraged. Press censorship was ended in 1966, but strong guidelines remained. Economically, Spain progressed dramatically in the 1960s and early 70s, stimulated in part by the liberal economic policies espoused by [Opus Dei](#); growth was particularly pronounced in the tourist, automobile, and construction industries.

Contemporary Spain

The year 1975 was marked by escalating terrorist activity in the Basque Country on the part of the militant separatist organization ETA (Euskadi ta Askatasuna), the death of Franco, and the beginning of the reign of King [Juan Carlos I](#). With

his premier, Adolfo Suárez González, the king ushered in a period of political reform and rapid decentralization. Juan Carlos opened the new bicameral Cortes in 1977. The Falange was dissolved in 1977 as well, and the Communist party was legalized shortly thereafter. A new constitution, which replaced the fundamental laws under which Spain had been governed since 1938, was ratified in 1978, formally establishing a parliamentary monarchy and universal adult suffrage.

Catalonia and the Basque Country were granted limited autonomy in 1977, the Balearic Islands, Castile-León, and Extremadura in 1978, and Andalusia and Galicia in 1980. In 1981 Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo became premier following Suárez's resignation. Rightist civil guards seeking greater centralization seized the Spanish parliament in 1981, but the coup was quickly put down. In 1982, a Socialist majority was elected to the Cortes in parliamentary elections and Felipe González Márquez became prime minister. Spain also expanded its international role; it was admitted into NATO in 1982 and became a member of the European Community (now the European Union) in 1986. Spain continued to enjoy economic growth as a result of increased domestic and foreign investment in the 1980s and 90s, but had one of the highest unemployment rates in W Europe. In 1988, a general strike prompted the government to increase workers' unemployment benefits and salaries for civil servants.

Basque separatist violence continued in the 1980s with the ETA committing hundreds of murders, but showed some signs of abating in the 1990s, following arrests of many ETA leaders. The ruling Socialist party suffered losses in the 1993 elections but was able to form a minority government with the cooperation of the Catalan nationalist coalition. Following the Mar., 1996, elections, a center-right government took office. Popular party (PP) head José María Aznar López became prime minister in coalition with the Catalan nationalists. Factors in the Socialists' fall included economic problems, corruption scandals, and charges that Socialist officials had endorsed a "dirty war" against Basque separatists in the 1980s.

Aznar introduced a government austerity and privatization program, and the economy experienced significant economic growth. A cease-fire called by the ETA in 1998 resulted in fruitless negotiations with Aznar's government, and in 1999 the ETA ended the cease-fire. With the end of the cease-fire the government took a hard line with the separatists. Also in 1999, Spain became part of the European Union's single currency plan. Benefiting from a prosperous economy, Aznar led the PP to a parliamentary majority in the Mar., 2000, elections.

Following the Sept., 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, the Spanish government sought greater international support for its campaign against the ETA and renewed its crackdown on the organization. In Aug., 2002, a Spanish judge suspended Batasuna, the Basque separatist party linked to the ETA, accusing it of collaborating with terrorists; the party was permanently banned in Mar., 2003. Despite strong opposition from the Spanish people, Aznar was a strong supporter of the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in 2003. Spain did not, however, commit troops to the invasion force, but it subsequently contributed to the occupation force.

The government's support of the U.S. occupation of Iraq appears to have contributed to multiple bombings of Madrid commuter trains in Mar., 11, 2004, shortly before Spanish national elections. Initially termed likely an ETA attack by Aznar's government, the bombings were soon linked to a largely Moroccan group of Islamic terrorists; 190 people died, and more 1,400 were injured. Although the PP had been expected to win the mid-March parliamentary elections, the opposition Socialists secured a plurality of the seats. Their win seemed due both to continuing popular opposition to sending Spanish forces to Iraq and to the government's strongly asserted, presumptive mischaracterization of those behind the bombings. Socialist leader José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, who had called for withdrawing Spain's troops from Iraq, did so after becoming prime minister.

Dependent on the support of Catalan nationalists, Zapatero agreed to consider increased autonomy for Catalonia. The Catalan government passed an autonomy plan in 2005, and the Cortes voted to approve increased autonomy for Catalonia in 2006. (A more extreme autonomy plan for the Basque Country, calling for "free association," failed to win Cortes approval in 2004.) The ETA, the militant Basque independence group that had mounted terror attacks since the 1960s, announced a "permanent" cease-fire in Mar., 2006, and called for negotiations; Zapatero announced in June the his government would open talks with the ETA. Also in June, Catalanian voters approved the autonomy plan; the approval meant that the powers accorded the Catalanian government could also devolve on other Spanish regions.

Negotiations with the ETA were slow to develop, although government representatives did meet with the ETA secretly in December. Progress was slowed in part by acts by each side that the other side regarded as contrary to the spirit of the cease-fire, and a major ETA bombing at the Madrid airport at the end of December led the government to announce it was ending the talks, and it subsequently arrested many ETA members. The ETA asserted the cease-fire continued, despite the bombing, but also threatened further attacks in retaliation for what it regarded as government moves against it, and in June, 2007, it officially ended its cease-fire. In the Mar., 2008, elections, the Socialists again won a plurality of seats in the Cortes; both the Socialist and Popular parties increased their seats a little at the expense of smaller regional parties.

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Definition

Spain from *Collins English Dictionary*

A kingdom of SW Europe, occupying the Iberian peninsula between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic: a leading European power in the 16th century, with many overseas possessions, especially in the New World; became a republic in 1931; under the fascist dictatorship of Franco following the Civil War (1936-39) until his death in 1975; a member of the European Union. It consists chiefly of a central plateau (the Meseta), with the Pyrenees and the Cantabrian Mountains in the north and the Sierra Nevada in the south. Official language: Castilian Spanish, with Catalan, Galician, and Basque official regional languages. Religion: Roman Catholic majority. Currency: euro and peseta. Capital: Madrid. Population: 39 371 000 (1998 est.). Area: 504 748 sq. km (194 883 sq. miles). Spanish name: **España**.



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