

Spain — Va-PoReg Country Report

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10/19/1469 Start Constitutional Monarchy: In 1479, the Crown of Castile and the Crown of Aragon were dynastically united by the Catholic Monarchs on 10/19/1469.^{107F¹} The governments, institutions, and legal traditions of each kingdom remained independent of each other; alien laws (*Leyes de extranjería*) determined that the national of one kingdom was a foreigner in the other Crowns/States). In 1831 the two kingdoms dissolved, and the unified kingdom of Spain emerged. the Constitution of 1812 enfranchised all Spanish men of Iberian or indigenous American descent in both hemispheres irrespective of property, but explicitly excluded Afro descendent men. Extended to all men from 1869 to 1878 (First Spanish Republic and three first years of Bourbon Restoration) and from 1890 to the end of the Second Spanish Republic (1931–36).^{108F²} According to LIED, only multiparty legislative elections were held during this period. No executive elections were present. On 02/11/1873 the parliamentary majority proclaimed a republic and forced King Amadeo I to abdicate. Suffrage now applied to men over 21. As early as May 1873, Spaniards elected a parliament under the new electoral law. Around four million Spaniards were eligible to vote.^{109F³} However, still in the transition phase to democracy, the restoration of the monarchy of the House of Bourbon took place on 12/29/1874. Brigadier General Arsenio Martínez-Campos, who fought for the Republican government against the Carlist (House of Savoy), sided with the Alfonists (House of Bourbon). In December 1874, Alfonso of Bourbon was proclaimed King of Spain. However, fighting with Carlists continued until March 1876. The king now had sole power to govern again. Census voting again applied to the parliamentary elections. The elections were now systematically manipulated on a massive scale. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive was subordinate to or held equal power with other institutions, indicating executive parity or subordination. Alfonso XIII was king of Spain from 05/17/1886 until 04/14/1931. However, the regime changed its character with the coup 1923. For almost the entire period under consideration, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as ambiguous regarding the status of political liberties. For 1923, our interpretation of PCLI indicates that political liberties were not really present. Until 1922, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. In 1922, Spain entered war against Morocco over the Spanish colonies and suffered heavy losses, which led to the government continuously losing popular support.⁴

09/13/1923 End Constitutional Monarchy/Start (Monarchical) Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy: After a coup against the parliamentary government Miguel Primo de Rivera established himself officially as prime minister and de facto as a dictator. During the Military Directory (1923-1925), the dictatorship created the official party of the regime, the Unión Patriótica (UP). However, Alfonso XIII was still king of Spain and played a considerable political role (Berman 2019: 265-67, Casey et al. 2020: 16).^{110F⁵} In classifying the relatively mild autocracy of this period as fascist compared to the Nazi regime in particular, we follow the assessment of Shlomo Ben-Ami (1983). According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. As per Polity5's classification, the executive wielded unrestricted authority without any formal limitations during this time. In this period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is likewise classified by us as showing that political liberties are absent. For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are robust. At the same time,

V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive.

01/28/1930 End (Monarchical) Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy/Start Autocratic Monarchy: On this date, Primo de Rivera resigned from office of prime minister, acknowledging that he had lost the tolerance and the support from the military and the king. We code the regime change event as a voluntary exit because, although the lack of legitimation forced Primo de Rivera out of office, he resigned on his own accord. The following governments of General Dámaso Berenguer and Admiral Juan Bautista Aznar were weak and could barely keep order (Berman 2019: 267-68, Casey et al. 2020: 16).^{111F}⁶ According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. In the specified timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, whereas V-Dem's PCLI indicates that political liberties were somewhat present. For the relevant year, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are robust. At the same time, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. This regime is a borderline case between an autocratic and a constitutional Monarchy, but the absence of political liberties combined with the lack of legislative constraints on the executive leads us to the categorization of an autocratic monarchy.

04/12/1931 End Autocratic Monarchy/Start Electoral Oligarchy (Patriarchal): On this date, local elections were held, which demonstrated that the major cities of Spain had a strong Republican support. Based on our observations, multiparty, executive and legislative elections were absent from 1936 onward, which contradicts the observations of LIED. The elections were classified as competitive per LIED. V-Dem's CEI starting with scores that indicate no cleanliness of elections increased into a range which indicates an ambiguous state regarding the cleanliness of elections since 1932. V-Dem's EF&FI indicates that the elections were overall somewhat free and fair. Based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. To avoid the risk of civil war and protests in Madrid, Alfonso XIII abdicated and left the country. The general elections in June 1931 were won in a landslide victory by the Republican-Socialist coalition. The government that was formed consisted of seven, later six parties.⁷ On 12/09/1931 a new progressive constitution was formulated, introducing a range of provisions including universal suffrage, freedom of religion, and efforts to diminish the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, among others.^{112F}⁸ In this timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as present, and V-Dem's PCLI is likewise classified by us as showing that political liberties are present.

11/19/1933 End Electoral Oligarchy (Patriarchal)/Start Electoral Democracy: On this date, Spain experienced a significant shift with general elections that were the first to include women voters.^{113F}⁹ Between 1933 and 1935 the elections were competitive. Based on our observations, multiparty, executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Since 1936 no competitiveness was scored by LIED. The elections were characterized by an ambiguous level of cleanliness until 1936, as reflected by the V-Dem's CEI, the political climate was already highly polarized and increasingly violent. From 1936 to 1938, the elections became not really clean. Therefore, regarding the broader focus of V-Dem's EF&FI outcomes underline somewhat free and fair election conditions between 1931 and 1939. The Second Spanish Republic, established with a progressive constitution that enshrined civil liberties, was nonetheless beset by extreme tensions between left-wing and right-wing factions, including the Falangists. These tensions escalated to violence, culminating in the assassination of the anti-fascist Lieutenant José Castillo by Falangists and the subsequent socialist retaliation with the murder of right-wing leader José Calvo Sotelo. This violence set the stage for further unrest, leading to the deeply contested 1936 general election.^{114F}¹⁰ LIED and V-Dem's PCLI indicates the presence of political liberties until 1935. Since 1936 LIED indicates no political liberties. V-Dem's PCLI outcomes point to somewhat political liberties in 1936, and an ambiguous state from 1937 to 1938. For 1939, we interpret PCLI as showing that political liberties were not really present. Based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. Following

the election of a leftist coalition government, the political situation deteriorated rapidly. From 1932 to 1936, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive. From 1937 onwards, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. Right-Wing military officers, discontented with the new government, began plotting a coup almost immediately. The coup, initiated on 07/17/1936 in Spanish Morocco, failed to achieve its immediate objective of overthrowing the government but instead triggered the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. The conflict quickly spread across Spain, dividing the nation between the Nationalists, led by Francisco Franco, and the Republicans. Franco, who initially was not the leader of the coup, rose to prominence due to a combination of military successes and the untimely deaths of his rivals. By October 1936, Franco had consolidated his leadership, being named the Caudillo of Spain and the head of the Nationalist government.^{115F}¹¹ His ascent was marked by the unification of right-wing factions, including his takeover of the Falange Española de las JONS and its merger with the Carlist *Comunión Tradicionalista* in 1937, creating the *Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS*, which became the sole legal party under his rule.^{116F}¹²

03/28/1939 End Electoral Democracy/Start Right-Wing (Corporatist) Autocracy: The defeat of the Popular Front government's forces in Madrid signaled the ultimate triumph of the nationalist armed forces (Rinehart/Browning 1990, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 94-95).^{117F}¹³ Initially, the Francoist dictatorship was characterized as a "fascitized dictatorship" or "semi-fascist regime," demonstrating evident influences of fascism in areas such as labor relations, autarkic economic policies, aesthetics, and the establishment of a single-party system.^{118F}¹⁴ The only trade union entity, known as the *Organización Sindical Española* (OSE or *Sindicato Vertical*), comprised corporatist associations bringing together both employers and workers, in contrast to Marxism's emphasis on class conflict. Additionally, all civil servants and public officials were required to pledge allegiance to the Principles of the National Movement.^{119F}¹⁵ Starting in 1945, Franco altered the distribution of power within his supporters, transitioning it from the Falange to Catholics.^{120F}¹⁶ Unlike fascist movements in Italy and Germany, Franco did not have a mass, populist movement behind him. Instead, his rise to power was a result of a military coup during the Spanish Civil War. The regime upheld conservative, traditional values, including strong ties to the Catholic Church and a rejection of liberal and left-wing ideologies. State repression of "enemies of the state" was widespread during this time, with liberals, socialists, Protestants, homosexuals, Jews as well as Basque, Catalan, Andalusian, and Galician nationalists being subjected to discrimination and persecution. The civil service was purged extensively, leading to roughly a quarter of all Spanish teachers and professors being removed from their jobs.¹⁷ Municipal elections were held every three years between 1948 and 1973, with one exception as the 1966 election was followed by an irregular four-year term, with elections resuming in 1970. The elections were subject to heavy manipulation and candidates were often pre-selected and approved by the regime. For example, election regulations at times allowed candidates to be confirmed as victors without any actual voting taking place.¹⁸ Per FH, for 1972 and 1973, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. As classified by FH for 1974 and 1975, the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. Based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive operated with unlimited authority, facing no institutional checks on power. Regarding the regime data sets there is a great uncertainty in classifying the regime led by Franco. While HTW and MCM classify it as a one-party autocracy, it is a personalist regime according to GWF. Different from that AF and BR categorize it as a military autocracy. In this period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is likewise classified by us as showing that political liberties are absent. From 1940 to 1942, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are limited. At the same time, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. For the remaining years, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were

absent.

11/22/1975 End Right-Wing (Corporatist) Autocracy/Start Constitutional Monarchy: Following Franco's death in 1975, King Juan Carlos took over as head of state with the same prime minister chosen by Franco in office. However, with Franco's death Spain became a de facto monarchy under King Juan Carlos I. The king quickly began steering Spain towards democratization. By June 1976, he replaced Arias Navarro with Adolfo Suárez, a former Francoist reformer who introduced the reforms that ultimately ended the Francoist system and a key figure in the transition to democracy (Rinehart/Browning 1988, Powell 1994: 16, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 95). This action which showed real and not only ceremonial power is decisive for our classification as a constitutional monarchy. While a democratically elected parliament is absent in this brief regime period it is more adequately classified as a constitutional monarchy. As classified by FH for 1975, the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. Per FH's scoring for 1976, the country is classified as partly free with a score of 8, which we categorize as rather not free.

11/18/1976 End Constitutional Monarchy/Start (Monarchical) Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: On this date, the Political Reform Law was passed by the Francoist government, which introduced universal suffrage parliamentary elections. Despite being passed under the Francoist corporatist system of representation, these changes marked the end of the Francoist regime. According to FH, for 1976, the country is partly free with a score of 8, which we interpret as rather not free. As per FH's classification for 1977, the country receives a score of 5 as free, which we categorize as rather free. LIED identifies political liberties are absent for the regime period, whereas V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as showing that political liberties are not truly present (1976) and then somewhat present (1977). For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited.

06/15/1977 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy: On this date the first free elections since 1936 were held.^{121F}¹⁹ The elections were won by Suárez González, who, although originally being part of the Francoists, was not responsible to the Francoist clique anymore, but rather to the constituents of his party, which is why González' term is considered the major break with the Francoist system.²⁰ Female suffrage was recovered with the new Spanish Constitution in 1977.^{122F}²¹ The first period saw the beginning of the development of the rule of law and the establishment of regional government, amidst ongoing terrorism, an attempted coup d'état and global economic problems.^{123F}²² Concerning the quality of democracy in Spain, it has experienced ups and downs. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. The elections score a constant competitiveness according to LIED. Since 1978, following the end of Franco's dictatorship, Spain has held democratic elections that have been consistently scored as clean by the V-Dem's CEI, reflecting a strong commitment to electoral integrity in the post-Franco era. In addition, since 1978 the overall election conditions are considered as free and fair by V-Dem's EF&FI. The political landscape is characterized by free and competing parties. The political landscape in Spain since the transition has been both simple and complex. From 1977 until 1982, Spain was governed by the Union of the Democratic Centre (Unión de Centro Democrático; UCD), with the major opposition party being the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español; PSOE). Other significant parties included the right-wing Popular Alliance (Alianza Popular; AP) and the Spanish Communist Party (Partido Comunista de España; PCE). In 1982, PSOE came to power and governed until 1996. The UCD subsequently split into smaller parties, and the Popular Party (Partido Popular; PP), successor to the AP, became the leading opposition force. The PP won a plurality in the elections of 1996 and formed a government.^{124F}²³ Spain is best described as a mid-performing democracy and has faced challenges such as secessionism, terrorism, corruption scandals, and economic crises. Despite these challenges, it has maintained stable democratic performance and seen improvements in the absence of corruption. As per FH's classification for 1977, the country receives a score of 5 as free, which we categorize as rather free. As per FH's classification from 1978 onwards, the country is considered free with a score ranging from 2 to 4, which we also interpret as free in our framework. Regarding

the political liberties they are present since 1980 according to LIED, whereas our interpretation of V-Dem's PCLI indicates their presence already since 1978. Since 1978, based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. Since 1979, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating comprehensive constraints on the executive except between 2012 and 2015 and in 2020 V-Dem's JCE is interpreted as comprehensive and LCE as robust. The transition to democracy, while successful in establishing a democratic system, did not fully address demands for justice and reconciliation from those oppressed during the dictatorship.^{125F}²⁴ Spain has a parliamentary system of government with a bicameral parliament consisting of the Congress of Deputies and the Senate.^{126F}²⁵ In 2022, the EIU Unit downgraded Spain from a full democracy to a flawed democracy due to concerns about its judicial independence, particularly over the appointment of new magistrates to the General Council of the Judiciary (CGPJ).^{127F}²⁶ However, Spain is still a liberal democracy according to our criteria.

(Monarchical) Liberal Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Blinkhorn 1986, Carr 1982, Hermet 1976, Linz 1964, Nohlen/Vallès 2010, Payne 1993, Payne 1999, Robinson 1970)

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Monarchs_of_Spain

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dictatorship_of_Primo_de_Rivera

⁴ <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html> , see narratives for version 5.0, Spain_R: 1-2, Spain_V: 1-2

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miguel_Primo_de_Rivera; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfonso_XIII

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfonso_XIII; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miguel_Primo_de_Rivera#Fall_from_power_and_death

⁷ <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html> , see narratives for version 5.0, Spain_V: 3.

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_Constitution_of_1931#Liberties_for_religious_minorities

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Spanish_Republic#1936_elections

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francoist_Spain

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francoist_Spain

¹³ <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2011/mar/29/archive-madrid-gives-itself-up-to-franco-1939>

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francoist_Spain

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movimiento_Nacional

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movimiento_Nacional

¹⁷ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Terror_\(Spain\)#Post-war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Terror_(Spain)#Post-war)

¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Municipal_electoral_regime_during_Francoism

¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1977_Spanish_general_election

²⁰ <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html> , see narratives for version 5.0, Spain_V: 6-7

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_transition_to_democracy

²³ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Spain/National-parties>

²⁴ <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/country/spain>

²⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Spain

²⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Spain

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