

THE ERA OF PRESIDENT PEDRO SANCHEZ IN SPAIN: ECONOMY, PROTESTS, CATALAN AMNESTY, LAWFARE AND FAR RIGHT WINGS

(İspanya'da Başkan Pedro Sanchez Dönemi: Ekonomi, Protestolar, Katalanca Affi, Lawfare ve Radikal Sağ)

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ÖZ

İspanya'daki toplumsal ve siyasi bölünmeler İspanyol siyasetinde önemli bir etkidir, Pedro Sanchez dönemi de bunun örneğidir. Pedro Sanchez sağcı Rahoy hükümetinin yolsuzluk nedeniyle devrilmesinin ardından başkanlığı devraldı ve çöken ekonomik yapı, pandemi, karantina süreci, Ukrayna-Rusya Savaşı gibi Avrupa kaynaklarını derinden etkileyen zor bir dönemle karşı karşıya kaldı. Pedro Sanchez, tüm olumsuzluklara rağmen ekonomide büyük başarılar imza attı ve insan hakları için çalıştı ancak 2023 seçimlerinde hükümeti kurmak için salt çoğunluğu elde edemeyince 2017'deki siyasi suçluların affı karşılığında Katalan ayrılıkçılarla ortaklık kurdu ve iktidarını devam ettirdi. Fakat Sanchez'in affı ülkede tartışmalara neden oldu ve muhalefetin düzenlediği büyük protestolar ülkede yaygınlaştı. Protestolara bazı Katolik gruplar da katıldı. Muhalefet af söylemini Avrupa Komisyonu'na da taşıdı. Sanchez'in başarıları af tartışmasıyla gölgelendi. Sonunda ülkeyi ikiye bölen af söylemi, "Lawfare"i gündeme getirdi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İspanya Lawfare, Pedro Sanchez, Katalan Ayrılıkçılar, Katolik Kilisesi İstismar

ABSTRACT

Social and political cleavages in Spain is a significant factors in Spanish politics, Sanchez period is an example of this. Pedro Sanchez took over the presidency after the right-wing Rahoy government was overthrown due to corruption; It faced a difficult period such as the collapsed economic structure, the pandemic, the quarantine process, and Ukraine-Russia War, which deeply affected European resources. Pedro Sanchez achieved great success in the economy and worked on human rights, despite all the negativities. However, when he could not obtain the absolute majority to form a government in the 2023 elections, partnered with the Catalan separatists in exchange for amnesty 2017 political criminals and guaranteed his power. Sanchez's amnesty caused controversy in the country and large protests organized by the opposition. Besides, some Catholic groups joined protests. Moreover, opposition carried the discourse of amnesty to European Commission. Sanchez's achievements were overshadowed by amnesty discussions. The issue divided the country and eventually process brought "Lawfare" discourse to agenda.

Keywords: Spain Lawfare, Pedro Sanchez, Catalan Separatists, Catholic Church Abuse

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Introduction

After 11 years, the socialist party won against the right. Pedro Sánchez is the new president of the Spanish Government (Muñoz, 2023). He came to power with the democratic left party PSOE in 2018, after the corruption scandal of the right-wing government. Sanchez's PSOE, which clinched its power in the 2019 elections, coincided with the period of great risks and deadly epidemics, quarantine, volcano eruption and evacuation of thousands of people, extraordinary forest fires in the Canary Islands and the effects of the Ukrainian-Russian War, in addition to the collapsed economy left by the corruption of the previous government. Looking at the period between 2018-2024, the following can be said in summary Sanchez became the first politician in Spain, to overthrow the incumbent right-wing government in Spain with a (corruption) interpellation motion in 2018, took over the prime minister's seat and then won two early elections, ultimately forming a coalition government with the far-left Podemos; This was also a first. Much of his tenure was marked by crisis management. Spain faced high epidemic death rates but later made a remarkable recovery as the government imposed tight restrictions, opened more hospitals and hired extra medical staff. The economy hit a record slump in 2020 but has rebounded solidly in 2021-22, thanks mainly to the multibillion-dollar EU recovery fund, of which Spain is one of the main recipients. Forced to deal with the politically devastating consequences of Catalonia's failed independence bid in 2017, Sanchez's government sought to appease separatists to gain their support in parliament. The opposition labeled him a traitor after he pardoned jailed pro-independence leaders and downgraded secession charges. A pro-European and integrationist who studied economic policy in Brussels and worked in the European Parliament and the United Nations, Sanchez also sought to combat another polarizing national legacy. The government exhumed Franco from his mausoleum and encouraged the search of victims of the civil war that preceded the fascist dictatorship of 1939-1975. Franco-era symbols were also removed from Spanish streets (Muñoz, 2023).

1. Current Far Right Wing Perspective

The Spanish incarnation of the far right is Vox (Khalip, 2023): According to El Espectador, there was no visible far-right in Spain until 2013, and they defend "the suspension of Catalonia's autonomy (...) the deportation of illegal immigrants, opposition to gay marriage, euthanasia and abortion, and the censorship of left-wing feminism" (Muñoz, 2023). In Spain, VOX's systems will be useful to discuss the election program before the early general elections on July 23,

2023. The party's promises; Repatriations in countries include closing “fundamentalist” mosques (Bolelli, 2023).

The election program of the Vox party, consisting of 100 articles, also includes anti-immigrant and anti-Islam issues, which political parties have not brought up until now during the election campaigns and have never been discussed.

Vox promises regarding immigrants: “Irregular immigrants in Spain or legal immigrants who commit crimes will be sent to their countries, penalties will be increased against mafia groups or NGOs that encourage irregular immigration, the law on those who enter the country illegally and try to get legal status will be changed, and citizenship will be granted.” He included the articles “language learning, taxation and integration conditions will be increased” in his election program.

Regarding anti-Islamism, Vox also stated that “fundamentalist mosques will be closed, imams who despise women and advocate jihadism will be deported and the financing of places of worship on Spanish soil by third countries will be banned, and Islamic religious education in public schools will end.” he argued.

The repercussions of the far right’s election program in the Spanish press were mostly on issues related to domestic politics. Vox reported that the cancellation of the laws enacted by the left government such as “abortion, euthanasia, expansion of the rights of LGTB, Democratic Memory (the law containing the social reckoning regarding the traces of the Franco era)”, the ban of separatist political parties in reference to Catalonia and Basque Country, the 17 autonomous states in the country. His promises such as restricting the rights of the administration and introducing a more centralized form of administration attracted attention (Bolelli, 2023). Apart from these, in foreign policy, Abascal met with Israeli ministers during the genocide in Gaza (A.A, 2023). But in this war Sanchez supported the peace between two Countries not approve the Israil’s and Hamas’s attack to civilians. While condemning the Hamas attacks and calling for the release of all hostages, he said government of Benjamin Netanyahu that “the indiscriminate bombings; the deaths of children and thousands more in Gaza are unacceptable. We are with all of the protestors. We demand a permanent cease-fire, that humanitarian aid enters Gaza, that there be an international peace process and that the entire international community recognize the state of Palestine,” he said to his crowd of supporters, who proceeded to give him a standing ovation (A.A, 2024).

2. President Sanchez's Coalition Process

Pedro Sanchez has met with Catalan separatist parties to gain support for his bid to form a new government and keep the center-left booster in power after inconclusive national elections in July 2023. Two separatist parties have demanded a blanket amnesty for their leaders, who were indicted and fled Spain after the 2017 secession referendum, in exchange for their votes in parliament. The president needed the support of these separatist parties in parliament to form a government, and in return for their support, accepted the amnesty law. The situation irritated many in Spain, including leading opposition parties on the right, who accused Sánchez of bowing to his violators. Spain's opposition parties staged protest against the talks in squares in the provincial capital and call the society to protest (Wilson and Sullivan, 2023). 2.5 million people demonstrated in Spain in mass market protests organized by the opposition against Sanchez's establishment of the government and the amnesty planned for the 2017 events in Catalonia. Protesters organized daily demonstrations that kept the PSOE party's headquarters on Calle Ferraz every evening. Protests were led by opposition parties, the centre-right party Partido Popular (PP) and the right-wing populist party Vox and supported by some social groups and NGO's. This increased polarization against the minority government (Ludger and Friedek, 2023).

Despite the protests, on Thursday, November 16, 2023, incumbent Spanish Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez (PSOE) was re-elected Prime Minister of Spain, receiving 179 out of 350 votes. The votes were distributed as follows: In addition to the support of the socialist party PSOE (121 MPs), the left populist election platform also relied on the votes of Sumar (31 MPs); Catalan republican separatist party ERC (7 MPs); ethno-nationalist separatist party Junts per Catalunya (JxC, 7 mandates); far-left Basque EH Bildu (an organization that is a continuation of the political branch of the former terrorist organization ETA called "Batasuna"; 6 mandates); Basque nationalists PNV (5 deputies); Galician nationalist bloc BNG (1 mandate) and Canarian coalition CCa (1 mandate) (Ludger and Friedek, 2023).

But after reelected Sanchez, protests went on. Moreover, the demonstrations do not only include protests, Vox leader Santiago Abascal said in an interview with the Argentinian newspaper Clarin, "The time will come and citizens want to hang him (Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez) by his feet." Vox called for "permanent mobilization" and supported nightly protests outside the Socialist Party headquarters (A.A., 2023). Party members who followed these calls

hung the president's puppet and protested in front of the party headquarters on New Year's Eve (The Times, 2024). After this, they resorted to such protests again at night.

3.Right Wing Attitudes During The Election Period and Amnesty

In the process leading up to the 2023 elections, PP and VOX agreed to jointly govern 140 cities and settlements in the May elections. It also managed to win two more regions that they had previously jointly governed. Vox is led by Santiago Abascal, a former PP member. Therefore, there is no sharp difference in opinion between the right-wing opposition party PP and VOX. The party opposes abortion rights, denies climate change, rejects refugees and immigrants, and argues that there is no need for the government to combat gender violence. The far-right VOX leader also targets Muslims, using the events in France as an excuse.

On the other hand, academic circles are uneasy about the far-right VOX. Nagore Calvo Mendizabal, a senior lecturer in Spanish and European Politics and Society at King's College London in England, sees Vox's entry into the government in the elections as a danger to the future of democracy in Spain. Pointing out that Vox's party program is a "copy of the principles of the Franco regime", Calvo cites the desire to return to the central government of the Franco period and the abolition of 17 regional administrations in the country as examples of this.

The opposition, which introduced and tried to popularize the term "Sanchizmo", is trying to manage perception by drawing similarities with the Fascist leader General Franco while slandering President Sanchez.

According to Maria Jose Canel Crespo, professor of political communication at Complutense University in Madrid, the dominant issue in Spain is based on the "honor" of Prime Minister Sanchez. The main opposition PP defined the policies of the socialist leader, who has been in the prime minister's seat since June 2018, as 'Sanchismo' and launched a smear campaign against them in the press and in the parliament.

Despite all this slander, the question of whether Sanchez's economic success could attract voters during the election process was on the agenda in 2023. Spain was seriously affected by the epidemic, both in terms of deaths and economic impacts. While the pandemic has severely tested the strength of the left-wing coalition government, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its knock-on financial effects have tested the government again. Sanchez has achieved successes such as a growing economy, falling unemployment and inflation, pension and minimum wage increases, and the creation of a minimum living income. The measures have helped millions of people, but they do not appear to have created a sense of loyalty among voters. Calvo, from

King's College London, said the nationalist tactics of the right wing pushed Sanchez to the defensive, while the laudable progressive policies of the left coalition made the government look out of touch (Euronews, 2023). This meant that Sanchez's efforts were not seen. But President Sanchez was determined and sensitive. Despite everything, he called the opposition to dialogue and continued to work (Huffington Post, 2023).

4. Protest Culture at Last Decide

Spain, in general, where people take to the streets and organise to protest. Examples of this can be given from various different protests, such as pandemic protests. During the Covid 19 pandemic, there were protests against vaccination and against quarantine closures. A quote from the media: "An average of 400 people died due to coronavirus per day in Spain (01/2021). Since the pandemic (01/2021), more than 55 000 people passed away due to Covid-19 in Spain. The total number of cases in the country exceeded 2.5 million. A state of emergency has been implemented throughout the country against the epidemic since October 25, and the current detailed state of emergency has been implemented in Spain with the initiative of local governments. In Spain, where the virus is most prevalent, people took to the streets to protest the administration's Covid-19 measures. Protesters who did not wear masks despite legal protection also criticized the ongoing vaccination campaign as a method to end the epidemic. They marched from Atocha station to Plaza Colon in the capital Madrid, chanting 'Freedom' slogans (Euronews, 2021).

When we look at the protests in Spain, anti-immigrant movements are also striking. The large protest of the PEGIDA movement against immigrants in Barcelona in 2015 is just one example of immigration protests. Besides, it is possible to talk the protests organized by immigrants for their own rights, for example; The protests organized by the "CNAAE" association, founded by the black African community, in Madrid's Left Square in the first week of June (2021) on the occasion of its anniversary, and announced that they would organize it in Barcelona the following week (A.A., 2021). According to the news report, CNAAE's representatives pointed out that racism and hate crimes have increased in Spain in recent years. In the manifesto read, it was said that there was no political desire to solve the problem of racism in Spain, that physical and verbal attacks, especially against underage black Africans, should be prevented, and that racism, which is frequently encountered in daily life. These protests, of which we can multiply examples, show that people are comfortable taking to the

streets and that there is a tradition of protest in Spain and that this method is used to criticize and threaten the government (A.A., 2022).

Protests and attempts to overthrow the government by agitating the public are not something new to the Sanchez government. Before amnesty issue, in January 2023, right-wingers took the people to the streets and accused the president of being a traitor in order to discredit him and weaken and overthrow his power. In these demonstrations, demonstrators waved Spanish flags and chanted “Sanchez, resign!” and “traitor!” They chanted “Sanchez to jail”. At the protest, Vox leader Santiago Abascal told the crowd that the government was “trampling on the constitution by locking up Spaniards” citing past lockdown Covid-19 restrictions (DW.com., 2023).

However, the culture of protest and the people's ease in taking to the streets and criticizing the government is also a powerful trump card in the hands of opposition groups and interest groups. The opposition is calling the people to the streets to protest in order to challenge the government. In addition to opposition parties, this call is also supported by interest groups that are anti-Sanchez government and some Catholic church congregations. The meeting between Catalans and President Sanchez and the issue of amnesty for the strong and integrated existence of the society created a new opportunity for manipulation and pressure for the opponents who were in conflict of interest with the government. The leader of the conservative PP, Alberto Núñez Feijóo, considered the meeting with the Catalans as a day that will go down in the “dark history of the country”. Feijoo called on the public for more protests. He claimed that the Prime Minister had formed an alliance for personal convenience and had completely surrendered to the “Independence Movement Blackmail”. PP Madrid regional president Isabel Díaz Ayuso told Spanish television that the Socialists (PSOE) had betrayed all their principles. He also blamed the Prime Minister for his determination to remain in office, spoke of “a dictatorship through the back door” and invited citizens to take to the streets against the President (Kirby, 2023).

In Spain, 7 years after the referendum movement of the Catalan separatists, following the turbulent days marked by mass protests against the amnesty agreement, some of which turned violent, President Sanchez's statement was as follows: “Let’s not be naive. “The problem of the People’s Party and Vox is not the amnesty, it is that they do not accept the results of the ballot box... What the right wing does not want is for us to continue to improve working conditions,” he said. While evaluating the point reached, he stated that globalist reactionaries want to prevent the country’s progress and are fighting against themselves: “Spain is fighting against the global

“reactionary wave” that wants Spain to “go backwards” “The amnesty will not be an attack on the Spanish Constitution, but it will be a demonstration of its strength, (McMurtry, 2023)” he said, also stating that the agreement was necessary to establish a viable government.

Sánchez faced anger for months after offering an amnesty deal to Catalan separatists in exchange for political support. Those leading this are the right-wing opposition, some Catholic groups, many people in the judiciary and prominent lawyers. On New Year's Eve, 2024, a crowd of approximately 300 demonstrators gathered in front of the Socialists' headquarters, brought a dummy resembling Sánchez, beat it until it fell apart, and then hung it with a rope. PSOE filed a complaint after the puppet of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez was beaten at the 2024 New Year's Eve parade in Madrid. Socialists asked the prosecutor's office to identify the perpetrators, saying that the “lynching” of the baby could constitute “incitement of hatred” against Sánchez- (Politiko, 2024).

Voters' differing views on amnesty deepen the divide. In Catalonia, only 20 percent of PP and 6 percent of Vox voters in Catalonia support the amnesty law, while 49 percent of Socialist voters support the amnesty law (Do Vale, 2023). Rather than calming the political debate, this inconsistency sparked widespread demonstrations led by the far-right Vox and the conservative PP. The response of these parties to the amnesty was to mobilize their activism with Francoist symbols and slogans on the streets of major cities (Do Vale, 2023).

During their protests during the 2023 election period, the Sanchez government was humiliated with severe insults. Crowds of protesters who came in front of the party building insulted the PSEOE ministers visually by holding insulting banners and slogans, as well as lifting naked inflatable dolls as large as the number of ministers into the air with the help of sticks, and severely humiliated (El Observador, 2023).

In addition to these events, some Catholic communities also rebelled and demonstrated against the government. Because President Sanchez had attracted the reaction of the Catholic communities for bringing up the harassment cases in the church. One of these actions that attracts attention is the action called Public Rosari. Activists gathered daily on the steps of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Madrid, just half a block from the national headquarters of the Spanish Socialist Party, known as PSOE, to protest the government by praying the rosary out loud for long periods of time (CatholicVote, 2023).

Furthermore, the upper classes of society were also against the president, and it was inevitable that they too would support the demonstrations. Because, to recover from the collapsed economy due to covid restrictions and the corruption of the previous government, President Sanchez adjusted taxes to regulate the economy in a way that disturbed the top rich of society. He said that there was a great injustice in society and that the rich were too rich, so he could not put this burden on the poor, and explained that he would be fair. Spain put on a new wealth tax for wealthy citizens. Residents with wealth exceeding \$2.9 million will be subject to a new wealth tax in 2023 and 2024, the Spanish government said. Those with assets of 3-5 million euros (\$2.9 million- \$4.8 million) will be taxed at 1.7 percent, while those with personal wealth of 5-10 million euros (\$4.8 million- \$9.6 million) will be taxed at 1.7 percent. He said that 2.1 tax would be collected. People with wealth over 10 million euros (\$9.6 million) will pay 3.5 percent (Al Jazeera, 29.09.2022). Additionally, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez asked global elites to play their parts to tackle inequality and economic injustice. “How can we ask citizens to put up with inflation when some companies pay no taxes thanks to fiscal paradise and loopholes?” Sanchez asked rhetorically during a speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, telling the crowd of ultra-rich business people and political leaders to “help change the situation.” He said his government, which has imposed wealth and windfall taxes this year, is on the “front line” fighting for increased well-being, social collaboration and environmental responsibility (A.A., 2023).

5. EU and Spain Amnesty

PP is a conservative, Christian democratic political party in Spanish politics has called on the European Commission to intervene to protect the rule of law in Spain, following widespread protests in Spain and criticism from some other parties, including the far-right VOX and liberal parties. Meanwhile, Sanchez's Socialist PSOE Party and the Partido Popular (PP) accused each other on Wednesday of being indirectly responsible for violent riots organized by radical and far-right groups outside the Socialist Party headquarters in Madrid on Tuesday night. As a general practice, the European Commission refrains from intervening in EU member states' discussions of draft laws negotiated at national stage. Yet, in the case of Spain, the EU administration showed quick reflexes (EU Commission, 2023). Siegfried Muresan, vice president of the center-right European People's Party (EPP), warned Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez that Spain could lose EU funds due to the controversial Catalan amnesty law he accepted in exchange for Catalan parties' support for his second term in office. “European funds can only come to Spain if the rule of law is respected,” the EPP said. The amnesty law is

a clear attack on European norms and values. "We have come to protect the rule of law," he said. On the other hand, Reynders said, "We will carry out our analysis carefully, independently and objectively to determine compliance with EU law (Euronews, 2023).

Speaking to reporters in Brussels with EU justice commissioner Didier Reynders and transparency member Věra Jourová, Bolaños said: "Regarding the amnesty law, I must say that the European Commission has zero concerns about the health and strength of the EU administration. Law in Spain and separation of powers; zero concern, zero, nothing." The Commission knows the law that has been presented, they know that it is a bill that is absolutely in line with the constitution, with Spanish law and also with EU law. Moreover, not only with EU law, but also with European values. Bolaños said that dialogue, mutual understanding and coexistence without conflict He added that it should be built. However, the European Commission rejected Bolaños' claim a day after the meeting, guaranteeing that the questions remained and that the dialogue with the Spanish authorities would continue. A spokesperson for the European Commission said in a statement on Friday, "Our analysis is ongoing and in this sense 'The commission has not yet said that the amnesty law does not raise any concerns' he said (Euronews, 30.11.2023). It is understood from these statements is that the amnesty does not seem problematic to the EU commission, but the investigation on this issue is still ongoing.

6. Spanish Amnesty

Spain has a parliament that traditionally passes political amnesty laws. In Spain, which experienced difficult democratic processes and a fascist period, amnesty is a method of reconciliation applied by governments in some periods. This is deemed necessary to reestablish social unity and harmony. If we talk about examples in history, the Amnesty law of 1977 is an example of this. The Amnesty Law of 1977 is an amnesty law covering crimes committed up to that date, approved as a fundamental part of the transition from the Franco regime to democracy and in the spirit of harmony. In addition, the amnesty and general amnesty granted by Primo de Rivera in 1924, through Alfonso is an example. Moreover, The general amnesty for political prisoners signed by Manuel Azaña in 1936 was also the same as the one passed by the Spanish parliament for amnesty (Sánchez, 2023).

With these data, it could be say that PSOE and Sanchez's government are not the first government to enact a political amnesty law in Spain. Moreover, when we look at the results of the laws enacted on this issue, it is clear that social unity has been formed. In this respect, it does not seem right to call the president a traitor and accuse him of violating the constitution.

Claims made in this direction appear to be unfounded. Accusing the president of treason and calling the people to the streets gives the impression of provocation. Vale's opinion is as follows: “Contrary to popular belief, the Spanish constitution allows amnesty and Spain had an amnesty law before. Moreover, agreements with separatists have often been used in the past to elect prime ministers in the country (Do Vale, 2023).

7. Spanish Economy Before And After Sanchez

2016 media reports titled “The victory of capital in Spain”: Rajoy, who was re-elected as prime minister, was elected as the president of the most corrupt party in Spanish democracy. Rajoy's corruption, put the economy in a difficult situation, the problems in salary payments and the lawsuits filed against him are known to the public. After a 300-day "interim government" period in Spain, Mariano Rajoy, Chairman of the right-wing People's Party, was re-elected as prime minister at the parliament session on October 29. Rajoy is the president of the most corrupt party in the history of Spanish democracy (PP-People's Party). His period as prime minister was the period when the biggest cuts were made in education, health and social aid, and workers' rights and salaries were reduced to the lowest levels with economic laws. The period in which freedoms and democratic rights were restricted in Spain with the Internal Security Law, which the people and workers called the “Gagging Law”, and the country became the OECD (Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation) country with the highest inequality. Mariano Rajoy, until that date He managed to divert the attention of the judiciary in a case involving his party, which was the largest corruption case ever brought to court. Former Treasury Minister Luis Barcenas, who was involved in the case known as the Gurtel case, was tried for 14 crimes (he remained in prison for 19 months) and the prosecutor requested a 42-year prison sentence for this person. He saved himself from this case (Evrensel, 2016).

President Sanchez, who came to power in 2018 after the right-wing government of President Rahoy, known for his corruption, tried to recover the country, which President Rahoy left in an economically difficult situation.

President Pedro Sanchez, who came to power in Spain after 11 years, made significant progress with his team in the collapsed economy. The government, which worked efficiently to establish a healthy economy, achieved extraordinary success.

Despite the negativities such as Covid and the Ukrainian war, Pedro Sanchez managed to bring the Spanish economy to a much better level than in 2019, when he took over the country. The improvement in the foreign trade balance, an increase in tourism figures, unemployment,

inflation and energy figures demonstrated the country's progress, and also showed that the positive atmosphere will continue in the coming years with the suspension of customs duties on European Union and US products until March 2025 (Department of Commerce, 2023).

Spain's economy and unemployment data showed positive developments during Sanchez's rule, and he managed to obtain privileges, especially in EU policies, regarding electricity consumption. Moreover, although there were reasons that challenged the country's management, such as the global epidemic and the Ukrainian war, the decisions and policies it took yielded positive results.

Specifically, the number of registered workers increased by 238,436 people between 2014 and 2019, compared to the April average of 174,000 people based on 5-year data. Thus, the total number of registered workers rose to an all-time high of 20,614,989, reaching 595,908 people in more than a year before. In addition, registered unemployment decreased by 73 thousand 890 people in April, falling below 2.8 million (the lowest figure since 2008).

Additionally, core inflation also declined. According to the figure announced by the National Institute of Statistics, headline inflation rose to 4.1% in April (3.3% in March). Base effects continue to dominate movements in the energy component. In April, the base effect was upward due to the decline in energy prices recorded in April 2022 (as a result of the monthly decline in electricity prices following the sharp rise in March 2022 and the start of the 20-cent rise). (Fuel support per liter). Core inflation (excluding energy and unprocessed food) fell significantly to 6.6% (7.5% in March) thanks to the base effect of processed food (the largest monthly increase was recorded a year ago, up 2.6% month-on-month) in historical series) and due to limited prices on the remaining components. In addition to all these, the increase in the tourism sector is also serious, Spain received 5.1 million international tourists in November, showing an 18.6% increase in the number of tourists compared to the same month of 2022, and increased tourist numbers in the first 11 months of 2023. The number increased by 18.2% (IN., 2023).

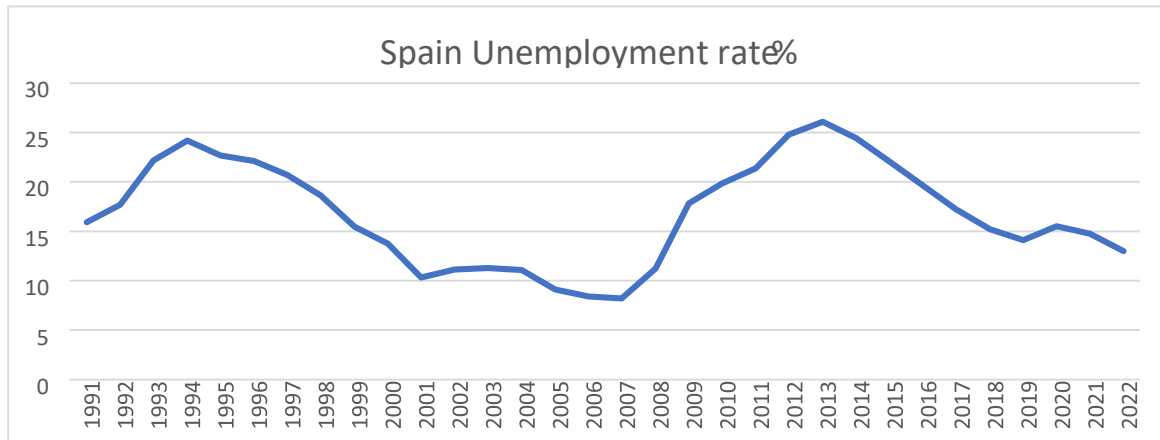
To summarize, it would be appropriate to mention all the economic successes of President Sanchez have been overshadowed by the right-wing parties. Calvo from King's College London expresses this situation as follows: "President Sanchez has achieved successes such as a growing economy, falling unemployment and inflation, pension and minimum wage increases and the creation of the minimum living income. The government also negotiated a deal with the EU that allows Russia to reduce consumer energy costs from its war in Ukraine. The

measures taken have helped millions of people. But the nationalist tactics of the right wing put Sanchez on the defensive, while the laudable progressive policies of the left coalition were portrayed as completely ‘out of touch’ with the government (Euronews, 2023).

The following detailed official analysis and scientific data show the success and progress achieved by the PSOE of Pedro Sanchez the Spanish economy during his rule. Pedro Sánchez is the prime minister of Spain and the leader of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE). Its economic performance and policies have been affected by various factors, including the Covid-19 pandemic, the Catalan crisis, the coalition with Podemos and the European Union.

Here is a brief summary of some of his main economic achievements and challenges: In 2019, it increased the minimum wage by 22%, the largest increase in the last four decades, and with another 5.5% increase in 2020, more than 2 million workers benefited from this improvement (OECD, 2023). By taking a look at Spain's unemployment rates, it is possible to understand how party changes in power in the country affect these data (World Bank, 2023).

Graphic 1. Unemployment, TOTAL (% Of Total Labor Force)



Source: World Bank, 2023

Between 1991 and 1996, unemployment rates were generally high. During this period, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), led by Felipe González, was in power until 1993. An increase in unemployment rates may have been observed during this period.

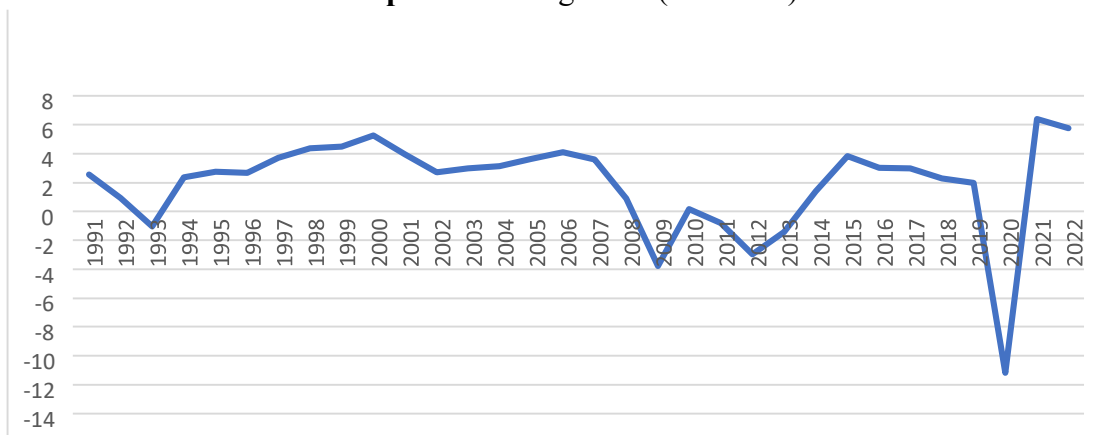
In 1996, power passed to José María Aznar, led by the Partido Popular (PP). There may have been a slight decrease in unemployment rates during this period. In 2004, PSOE came to power again under the leadership of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. Unemployment rates may have fluctuated during this period. The 2008 crisis caused a significant increase in unemployment rates. During this period, Zapatero's government struggled with economic

difficulties. In 2011, the PP-led government of Mariano Rajoy came to power. An increase in unemployment rates may be observed in the early years, but a downward trend may have begun in the following years.

By 2018, unemployment rates appear to have slowly decreased. The economic policies of the PSOE government led by Pedro Sánchez may also have an impact. Other important factors during this period include economic reforms, relations with the European Union, and international economic conditions. However, these comments are a general evaluation; A more detailed analysis is needed to identify specific policy impacts.

When looking at GDP growth rates to evaluate Spain's economic performance, it is possible to understand how changes in political power in the country are reflected in economic indicators. The growth rates recorded between 1991 and 2022 point to important turning points, crises and government changes in Spain's political scene. The processes of PSOE, PP and other political parties coming to power have caused fluctuations in the economic situation of the country by affecting GDP growth rates. In this context, political decisions, economic policies and national crises played a decisive role on the economic course of Spain. This article will focus on the effects of political power to understand changes in Spain's GDP growth rates. By looking at Spain's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rates, we can evaluate how party changes in power in the country affect these economic indicators. The graphic 2 shows economic growth of Spain (World Bank, 2023).

Graphic 2: GDP growth (annual %)



Source: World Bank, 2023

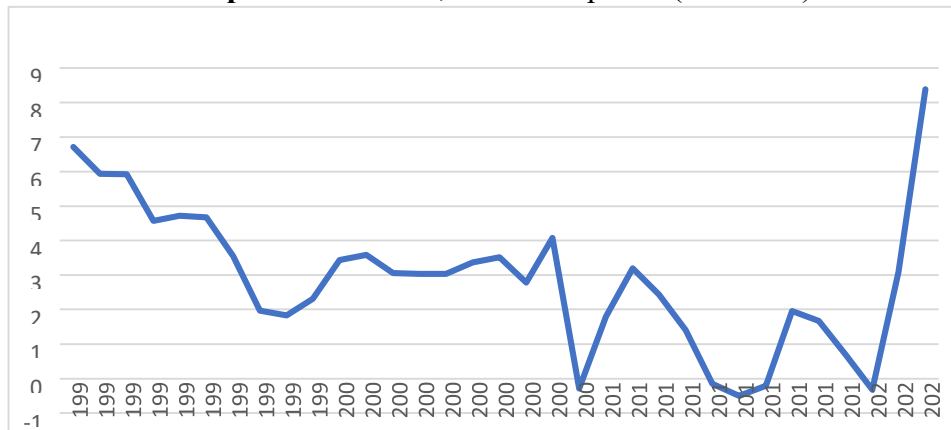
Based on graphic 2, between 1991 and 1996, GDP growth rates generally followed a stable course. During this period, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) was in power

and the economy performed relatively positively. In 1996 Partido Popular (PP) came to power. No significant change was observed in GDP growth rates during this period.

The 2008 crisis caused a severe decline in GDP growth rates. During this period, the PSOE government led by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero was in power. In 2011, the PP-led government of Mariano Rajoy came to power. There were negative growth rates in the early years, but a recovery trend began in the following years.

In 2018, the PSOE government led by Pedro Sánchez came to power. During this period, GDP growth rates increased slightly as part of the economic recovery process. In 2020, there was a severe GDP contraction due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, but a recovery trend was observed in 2021 and 2022. Other factors besides economic performance during this period may be influential, but in general it can be said that the policies of the party in power have a decisive impact on GDP growth rates. In case of inflation, changes in inflation rates in Spain appear to be influenced by a combination of global economic factors, crises and policy decisions, as well as political power. By taking a look at Spain's annual inflation rates in consumer prices (World Bank, 2023), we can evaluate the effects of changes in political power and economic events in the country on inflation.

Graphic 3: Inflation, consumer prices (annual %)



Source: World Bank, 2023

Based on Graphic 3, between 1990 and 1996, inflation rates remained generally high. During this period, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) was in power and it was observed that uncertainties in the economy increased inflation. In 1996, Partido Popular (PP) came to power. There may have been a decline in inflation rates during this period, but a marked

improvement was seen by 2000. The 2008 global financial crisis caused fluctuations in inflation rates. During this period, the PSOE-led government tried to combat economic difficulties.

In 2012, the PP-led Mariano Rajoy government came to power and inflation rates remained unstable for a while. After the PSOE government led by Pedro Sánchez took office in 2018, inflation rates remained low in 2018 and 2019. However, there was negative inflation due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In 2021 and 2022, inflation rates increased again. During this period, global economic conditions, as well as economic recovery and post-pandemic effects, may also have an impact (OECD, 2023).

8. Lawfare as a Weapon in Spanish Politics

Lawfare is a term that using law as a policy tool to achieve warlike objectives by political forces. Legal warfare, represented by the portmanteau “lawfare”, goes further than merely supplementing battle field tactics. Lawfare is a set of tactics that could be applied to all wars: hot or cold, large or small, declared or undeclared, just or unjust. Wielded by both state and non-state actors, the law increasingly replaces the violence that defines warfare of the more traditional, “kinetic” (i.e., physical and blood-soaked) sort. Lawfare is option for liberal democratic governments, it may prove to have a lasting value in its development of lawfare as an organizing principle. Lawfare succeeds best is in showing that the nature of war is evolving away from its traditional kinetic forms, by identifying the legal battlefields that may pervade conflicts well into the future (Welch, 2016).

Lawfare is using law as a weapon, and after the 2023 elections, an unexpected protest and legal process started in Spain, and it is possible that this process will go to lawfare. When the PP, which narrowly came ahead in the head-to-head elections, could not find the majority to form a coalition, PSOE agreed with the Catalans to find the majority to form a government, accepting the condition of granting amnesty to political criminals, so got power with the support of the Catalans, which polarized the country legally and brought new debates to the agenda. The law to amnesty will foreseeably be ready in April or May 2024, later on judges evaluate and decide on the application (El País, 17.01.2024).

During this period, the concept of “lawfare” became the most talked about concept behind the scenes. Using the law for political purposes. The opposition accuses the government of treason. And the majority of judges were appointed while the opposition was in power. This situation may affect the decisions and the process. On the other hand, jurists are also divided into two. While some claim that Sanchez violated the constitution and is guilty, some jurists

argue that amnesty has been applied in many similar cases before and there is no harm in it. This situation turns into exactly the Lawfare process. The parties blame each other for this issue and talk about manipulation of the law. Pedro Sánchez said: “There cannot be a more paradigmatic example of 'lawfare' than the kidnapping of the judiciary by the PP” (El País, 2023). He asserts that PP uses the law for its own aim.

Sánchez's ruling Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) and the People's Party (PP) have clashed for years over judicial appointments and reforms. The two vied for control of judicial authority and, as a result, the entire judiciary; appointed judges were labeled “conservative” or “progressive” and their political affiliations were made public.

In particular, the PP's delay in efforts to reach an agreement on new appointments indicates that relations have deteriorated in the months since Sanchez offered Catalan amnesty. The judiciary has become their political battleground. Critics say conservative leaders fear losing control of the Supreme Court, which is dominated by conservative-backed justices.

PP leader Alberto Núñez Feijóo, who won the July elections but failed to muster enough support to take power, continued to block Sánchez's attempts to reach an agreement and instead called for reform of the laws governing appointments. This reflects the broader political agenda of the People's Party, said Lluís Orriols University Carlos III of Madrid “[The People's Party] does not accuse the government of not managing the economy, being corrupt or inefficient; its main angle of attack is to accuse the government of eroding the rule of law,” he said. The terms of office of judges serving on Spain's General Judicial Council ended five years ago, and they will remain on the council until the government appoints new judges. The council, which appoints senior judges, failed to appoint 23 of the 79 Supreme Court vacancies that opened up due to retirements and deaths after a gap of half a decade. PSOE and PP failed to receive the required three-fifths support from parliament to make new appointments. Currently, Spain's highest judicial office, dominated by judges appointed by the PP when it was in power in 2013, operates on an ad hoc basis, sparking concerns from the EU. European Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders recently described new appointments to Spain's General Council for the Judiciary as “a matter of priority”. This disagreement is of such a deep-seated nature that both sides have now agreed to allow the European Commission to mediate. The EU's 2023 justice scorecard placed Spain 23rd in the bloc in public perception of the independence of courts and judges, with political pressure the most cited reason for intervention. “damaging the credibility of public institutions, this [dispute] shows that the Spanish justice system is very

sensitive to political interference by parties," said Joaquim Bosch, a judge and spokesman for the Association of Judges for Democracy (JxD) in the Valencia region.

The politicization of the judiciary has been a recurring theme for decades. In 1985, the Socialist government of Felipe González introduced a reform that allowed the parliament to appoint members of the judicial council, in order to limit the influence of huge number of Franco-era judges still serving.

Sanchez's recent decision to grant amnesty for those involved in the 2017 Catalan independence referendum has also drawn him into direct conflict and rebukes from those at the top of the country's justice system.

The government insists the bill is legally watertight. However, before the law was presented to parliament, the APM, the Association of Professional Magistrates, Spain's largest organization of judges, issued a strongly worded statement against the law, warning that the amnesty "attacks the foundations of the state and the rule of law."

Much of the criticism from the judicial panel comes from the part of the amnesty deal that refers to "rules of law," the use of legal systems and institutions to harm dissidents, a buzzword for Catalan nationalists who believe state institutions have recently acted against them. Many cite the long prison sentences given to independence leaders following the failed illegal Catalan independence drive. There is little sign of the conflict between Sánchez's parliamentary allies and the judiciary ending, and both sides remain aggrieved. Orriols from Carlos III University explains the current situation; "We see a clear conflict of powers in this country: a war is going on between the judiciary and the executive," he said. "The judiciary is using its resources to defend itself against the onslaught of the parliament and Catalan institutions, while the executive believes that the judiciary has overreached" (Politico, 2023).

However, looking at the attitudes of lawyers in the country, more than 200 lawyers signed the document titled Lawyers for International Amnesty, Democracy and Coexistence, to express their support for the amnesty law negotiated by PSOE with the Catalan independence parties. They argued that "it could approve measures such as an amnesty law that would help normalize the political situation." In addition, "It cannot be defined as pure demagoguery when lawyers' organizations with purely partisan purposes describe regulatory processes that have not yet started as a trap, or describe the approval of norms in parliament and with qualified majorities as apocalyptic, as the beginning of the end." (El País, 2023) they said. On the other hand, the

International Bar Association (IBA) warned that the agreement between PSOE and Junts on amnesty could "seriously erode the rule of law"(Europa Press, 13.11.2023) in Spain, showing its "unwavering" support for the Bar Association's demonstrations.

9. Sanchez, Catholic Church Abuse and National/International Human Rights

Some Catholic groups take part in the demonstrations against the government. It is seen that the reason is that the government's Catholic body kept the investigations tight and revealed child abuse in the church. This situation damaged the reputation of the Catholic church. PSOE government, under the leadership of Pedro Sanchez, proposed the establishment of an independent commission for church abuse cases. The reason for this was that the Catholic Church did not seriously pursue the reported harassment cases. Political impetus for the investigation came after Catalan writer Alejandro Palomas first publicly revealed that he had been abused by a priest at his school when he was eight years old. President Sanchez took the unusual step of reaching out to him on Twitter and meeting with Alejandro Palomas. Spain's parliament then agreed to consider another request for an investigation into such abuses, at the request of Podemos, the far-left partner of Sanchez's left-wing coalition, and two other parties (Phnom Penh Post, 2022). The proposal was passed by the parliament under the chairmanship of Sanchez and the research lasted 15 months and the results were very dire. Bishops reacted negatively to the establishment of a national commission. They showed an obstructive attitude towards the investigation (Crux Now, 2021). The independent commission in Spain, in a report shared, revealed that more than 200 thousand children may have been subjected to abuse by Catholic clergy. The report, which was requested to be prepared by the Spanish Congress last year(2022), is based on the results of the commission's survey of 800 thousand people. The 700-page report revealed that 0.6 percent of the adult population in the country, or 39 million, were exposed to clergy abuse during childhood. In addition, the report revealed that sexual abuse also occurred in institutions supervised by the church, and it was stated that when church personnel were included, the number of abused people increased to 400 thousand. The report, which included the statements of at least 487 people who were sexually abused, also included the "emotional devastation" experienced by those who were subjected to harassment. Angel Gabilondo, President of the Spanish Ombudsman Institution, who announced the results of the research to the public, criticized the churches for their failure to take action and their efforts to hide the abuse, saying, "What happened was done thanks to silence." Gabilondo stated that those who were abused went through a psychologically difficult process and said, "There are people who committed suicide."and "Some people's lives were never the same again," he said

(Sabah, 2023). Criminal lawyer Josep Tamarit has spent the last 15 months immersed coordinating the writing of the first official and independent report on sexual abuse against minors committed within the church. According to him raports shows 1.13% must have been subjected to religious harassment, which amounts to 450,000 victims (El Diario, 2023).

Politicians, journalists and society are very angry with the Catholic Church because today 440,000 children, who is now adult that is, almost half a million people, have been raped in the church over the years. The Catholic Church hid this. The figures presented by the report exceed France's estimated number of 330,000 victims in 2021. The Ombudsman contacted half a thousand defectors, consulted El Pais newspaper's database, judicial archives and records provided by the Church itself. El Pais Media advocated for "bold and urgent measures" to end sexual assaults related to the Catholic Church, followed by a proposal to end the current concordat with the Vatican, publicly funded or run-on religious education centers, and integrate them into the public. It may be thought that the church harassment investigation pitted the Sanchez government and Catholics against each other, but Sanchez worked for all kinds of human rights during her rule. Sanchez government, which also passed a new law on sexual crimes in 2022, is determined to prevent all kinds of harassment and rape in society. The law, publicly known as the "Only yes is yes" (Solo sí es sí) law, which requires clear expression of consent in sexual relations, came into force on October 7, 2022. The new law eliminates the distinction between "sexual abuse" and "sexual assault" and considers any sexual intercourse without explicit consent as "rape" (Euronews, 2022).

In addition, the Sanchez government has also worked at the international level against sexual harassment, forced labor of children, and human trafficking, women and children rights. Parliamentary proposals in this direction and his active participation in the UNTOC conference, being a member of the International Security Alliance and approving the decision to provide 10.6 million Euros in financial aid to the human trafficking program focusing on Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Bolivia are examples of his work in this direction. They show the serious attitude of the Sanchez government to human rights (Congreso de los Diputados, 2022).

Conclusion

President Pedro Sanchez came to power in 2018 by forming a coalition government. He managed very difficult periods such as an economy deteriorated by corruption, pandemic, quarantine, Ukraine-Russia war and energy crisis with the coalition government and achieved

success in the economy. The agreements made with the EU, the decrease in unemployment rates, the recovery of inflation and tourism figures are some examples of these. On the other hand, during his rule, he made progress in the country in terms of human rights and law. One of his most important works was to get the parliament to approve the establishment of a commission independent of the church and to launch an investigation into the harassment cases that have been occurring in the Catholic church in the country for years. The report published at the end of the process, which continued despite all obstacles, revealed that 440,000 children were subjected to harassment by religious officials in the church. This figure, which reached nearly half a million people, was much higher than the church harassment cases in France, which astonished the world. Sanchez shed light on this incident, which had been covered up for years. Additionally, it signed international agreements on human trafficking, children's and women's rights, and immigrants. The declaration is essential law rearranged the penalties for harassment and rape. All of these were developments that advanced the country in terms of gender and human rights. All these developments in terms of economy and human rights in the country were not enough for him to come to power on his own in the 2023 elections. There is a stereotypical right wing in the country. Even if a left-wing party is successful, it may not be seem to the ideologically stereotyped far-right audience. After the right-wing party, which could not form a government on its own and could not find a coalition partner in the 2023 elections, Sanchez's left party had to agree with the Catalan separatist parties to create a government and won the election with the support of the Catalans in exchange for political amnesty. The amnesty law for the Catalans became an important and valid reason for protest for all opposing masses. By provoking the nationalist people, they hurl insults at the president and protest. Protest is common in Spanish culture. Therefore, people easily took to the streets. Of course, there are those who are really affected by the manipulation and take to the streets, but those who organize the protests are the opposition parties and their supporters. In addition to all these, some Catholic communities also organized and protested the government. because the Sanchez government initiated the harassment investigation, which damaged the reputation of the Catholic authority as a result of the investigation of the impartial commission, the church was found guilty of abusing 440,000 children. This situation exposed the crimes of the church, which had been closed for years, and the church was reacting to the Sanchez government. Despite all Sanchez's achievements, he was blacklisted by the Catholic church. In addition to all this, Pedro Sanchez offended major interest groups and cartels. In order to save the collapsed country's economy, he increased the wealth tax collected from the richest people in society. This

enabled him to gain powerful enemies. Sanchez's efforts bore fruit and the Spanish economy progressed, but interest groups were added to the oppositions that wanted to bring him down.

On the other hand, opponents complained to the European Commission, accusing Sanchez of violating the constitution. The commission is also following this process. In reality, the amnesty law has been passed many times before in the Spanish parliament and is not against the law. There are also plenty of examples of things like this being made for selection. When this was the case, the subject came to lawfare and many people started talking about lawfare, including the president. In other words, This situation also divided the jurists into two. The impartiality of judges is a frequently discussed issue in the country. Most of the judges were appointed during the time of the right-wing party that organized the protests. The fact that the president is accused of treason, even though the amnesty has been passed by the parliament before and is one of the practices of the parliament, gives the impression that the groups that are disturbed by the president's existence are trying to punish him. In short, the country has become polarized into right and left, and the basic dynamics of this polarization are not just amnesty; There are many different topics such as ideology, religion, nationalism, conflict of interest, economy, politics.

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