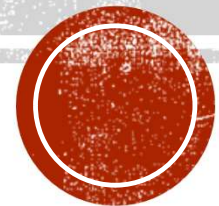


BACKGROUND GUIDE

SPAIN



INTRODUCTION

1. **Geography:** Spain is located in southwestern Europe on the Iberian Peninsula, bordered by France, Portugal, Andorra, and the Mediterranean Sea.
2. **Capital City:** Madrid is the capital and largest city of Spain, known for its cultural landmarks like the Royal Palace and Prado Museum.
3. **Terrain:** Spain's diverse terrain includes mountain ranges like the Pyrenees and Sierra Nevada, vast plains, and over 4,900 kilometers of coastline.
4. **Climate:** Spain has varied climates, from Mediterranean along the coasts, continental in central regions, and oceanic in the north.
5. **Population:** Spain has a population of approximately 48 million, with the majority living in urban centers like Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia.
6. **Language:** Spanish (Castilian) is the official language, with regional languages like Catalan, Basque, and Galician also widely spoken.
7. **Symbolism:** The Spanish flag features red and yellow, symbolizing strength and generosity, with the national coat of arms representing its rich history.



HISTORY

1. **Ancient Civilizations:** Spain was inhabited by Iberians, Celts, and later Romans, who established Hispania as a vital province of their empire.
2. **Muslim Rule (711–1492):** The Moors ruled much of Spain for nearly 800 years, leaving a lasting influence on its architecture, culture, and sciences.
3. **Reconquista and Unification:** The Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, unified Spain in 1492, ending Muslim rule and initiating Spain's Golden Age.
4. **Colonial Empire:** Spain became a global power in the 16th century, establishing colonies across the Americas, Asia, and Africa.
5. **Modern Era:** Spain transitioned from dictatorship under Franco (1939–1975) to a parliamentary democracy, joining the European Union in 1986.



POLITICAL SYSTEM

1. **Government Type:** Spain is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy, with a king as the head of state and a prime minister as the head of government.
2. **Legislature:** The Cortes Generales consists of two houses: the Congress of Deputies and the Senate, responsible for lawmaking and oversight.
3. **Executive Branch:** The prime minister leads the government, supported by ministers overseeing various portfolios like defense, economy, and education.
4. **Judiciary:** The judiciary is independent, with the Supreme Court and Constitutional Court ensuring legal compliance and protecting citizens' rights.



ECONOMY

1. **Global Standing:** Spain is the fourth-largest economy in the Eurozone and one of the world's top 15 economies by nominal GDP.
2. **Key Industries:** Tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, and renewable energy are major contributors to Spain's economy. The country is a leading producer of olive oil and wine.
3. **Trade and Exports:** Spain exports machinery, vehicles, pharmaceuticals, and food products. Key trade partners include Germany, France, and the UK.
4. **Challenges:** Unemployment, regional economic disparities, and reliance on tourism are key challenges. Efforts are being made to diversify the economy.



FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. **Role in the EU:** Spain is a key member of the European Union, advocating for stronger economic and political integration within the bloc.
2. **Global Alliances:** Spain is a member of NATO, the United Nations, and the World Trade Organization, emphasizing multilateral cooperation.
3. **Relations with Latin America:** Spain maintains close cultural and economic ties with Latin American countries, leveraging shared language and history.
4. **Regional Issues:** Spain's relationship with Morocco is significant, involving cooperation on migration, trade, and territorial disputes over Ceuta and Melilla.



SOCIETY AND CULTURE

1. **Cultural Heritage:** Spain is known for its rich artistic and cultural legacy, including famous figures like Pablo Picasso, Miguel de Cervantes, and Salvador Dalí.
2. **Festivals:** Spanish festivals like La Tomatina, Running of the Bulls, and Semana Santa showcase its vibrant traditions and religious influences.
3. **Education:** Spain offers free public education through secondary school. Its universities, such as the University of Barcelona, are renowned in Europe.
4. **Cuisine:** Spanish cuisine is celebrated worldwide, with dishes like paella, tapas, and churros. The Mediterranean diet is central to its food culture.



CURRENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

1. **Regional Independence Movements:** Catalonia and the Basque Country have movements advocating for greater autonomy or independence, creating political tensions.
2. **Youth Unemployment:** High youth unemployment remains a significant challenge, prompting government initiatives to boost job creation and training.
3. **Climate Change:** Spain faces challenges like desertification and water scarcity due to climate change. Investments in renewable energy are part of its solution.
4. **Immigration:** As a gateway to Europe, Spain manages migration flows from Africa and Latin America, balancing humanitarian needs and border security.

