

Spain's pseudo-left Sumar and Podemos back rearmament drive

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Spain's ruling coalition government of the Socialist Party (PSOE) and pseudo-left Sumar have enthusiastically celebrated the European Union's €800 billion plan for military rearmament.

Last Thursday, during the European Commission's extraordinary Council meeting in Brussels, the Spanish government pledged to accelerate its official defence spending to reach the 2 percent of GDP NATO target before 2029.

When questioned about this at a press conference, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez of the PSOE responded, "The answer is yes, and next week I will inform all parliamentary groups when I meet with them."

He added, "It is clear that we all need to make an early effort ahead of 2029." Justifying Europe's military rearmament on a scale not seen since the 1930s, Sánchez stated, "all Europeans [must] make an effort to invest more and, above all, invest better with a shared assessment of Europe's security needs, it is clear that we must act."

The context Sánchez referred to is one of escalating geopolitical tensions between the European powers and the United States. Washington is maneuvering to secure Ukraine's rare earths and other strategic resources by negotiating a deal with President Vladimir Putin—one that Moscow has indicated could also grant the US access to Russian assets far surpassing those in Ukraine.

For the European powers, a Ukrainian defeat would represent a severe setback, cementing US dominance over vital mineral deposits at their expense.

An even greater concern for the European powers is the potential of a US-Russia alliance, which they perceive as an existential threat. They are aware that President Donald Trump not only wants to decouple Russia from China, but to play Russia against the European Union which he views not as an ally, but a competitor. This underlying fear is driving the UK, France, and other European states to consider deploying troops to Ukraine, escalating the risk of direct military confrontation with Russia.

Sumar, the PSOE's junior coalition partner, known for offering mild criticisms of government decisions for not being "left" enough while still pledging its unwavering loyalty to the coalition, on this occasion eagerly endorsed Sánchez's

position.

Following the explosive White House clash between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky two weeks ago, Sumar declared that the incident "must be a wake-up call for Europe" and that "in the face of Trump and Putin's world, Europe must urgently build its independence and security." It also denounced "the imperialist ambitions of the Trump administration."

Sumar is supporting preparations for Spain to take part in Europe's return to the pursuit of imperialist interests by force of arms, even if that involves conflict not only with Russia, but with US imperialism.

In 1898, Spain lost its remaining colonies, including Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam, during the Spanish-American War. During the Second World War, although Spain under Franco did not enter the war on the side of Nazi Germany and remained officially neutral, it provided materials, such as tungsten, that were essential to Germany's armaments industry.

Franco also sent a 45,000-strong infantry division of fascist volunteers to support Nazi Germany's war of extermination against the Soviet Union, then an ally of the US against German imperialism.

After the defeat of Nazi Germany, Franco shifted to Washington. In 1953, Spain signed the Madrid Pacts with the US, where Spain allowed the establishment of four US military bases in exchange for economic and military aid, and de-facto international rehabilitation after years of isolation following the Second World War. Spain was integrated into the Western defence system aimed at the Soviet Union without becoming a member of NATO.

After Franco's death in 1975, Spain sought to balance its integration into the European Union, dominated by France, Germany, and the UK, and aligning itself with the US-led NATO alliance.

Sumar's attempt to reframe Spain and Europe's militarisation as an act of anti-imperialism ignores Madrid's backing of US-led wars over the past decades. Since 1990, Spain has participated in the two wars against Iraq (1991 and 2003), the dismembering of Yugoslavia during the 1990s, Afghanistan (2001) and Libya (2011). Spain has also armed

Ukraine against Russia and the Israeli genocide against Palestinians.

Sumar supports the extraordinary military spending increase, that will inevitably be paid for by the working class, while claiming that it advocates nothing more than greater efficiency.

“It is not so much about increasing military spending as it is about making military spending more efficient,” said Verónica Barbero, Sumar’s parliamentary spokesperson. The priority was to “consider what role Europe should play in this field,” she added, concluding her remarks by cynically stating that Sumar “will never support militarism.”

Sumar is following the path set by Podemos, from which it split in 2023. Between 2020 and 2023, under the PSOE-Podemos government, the Defence Ministry’s budget rose from 1 percent of GDP (€10.2 billion) to 1.3 percent (€19.7 billion). In 2023 alone, €7.7 billion was allocated to weapons procurement and development—a 69 percent increase from 2022. By then, 30 percent of the government’s total investment budget was already directed towards arms.

The government plans to raise military spending to 1.32 percent of GDP this year and to 2 percent by 2029, which the Treasury technicians’ union Geshta estimates would mean spending €95.5 billion on weapons and defence over four years. To meet the commitments, Spain would have to increase this year’s defence budget by €3.5 billion, maintaining an annual expenditure of €23.9 billion until 2028.

Pacifist groups such as the Centre Delás and Colectivo Tortuga, which have been scrutinising military expenditure in Spain for over a decade, have long accused Madrid of having already surpassed the 2 percent threshold when factoring in military-related allocations across other ministries—since the government only accounts for the Ministry of Defence’s budget—along with cost overruns and off-budget expenditures. Colectivo Tortuga estimates that Spain’s actual military spending for 2024 stands at €60 billion, exceeding 5 percent of GDP, a level that would already meet the target demanded by Trump for NATO countries.

Podemos, which presents itself as the official “left-wing” opposition in parliament, is today posturing as a critic of militarism. Former Minister of Equality and European Member of Parliament Irene Montero stated that the EU’s rearmament plan is “a path of blood and suffering for the peoples of Europe.”

Podemos’ Secretary General Ione Belarra wrote on X: “Sánchez says he opposes Trump, but he polishes his boots and accelerates the military spending increase Trump requested to reach 2% of GDP sooner. This government is digging its own grave. Every euro spent on weapons is a cut to our public healthcare and education. This is not the way.”

Podemos never opposed military spending or militarism. In 2022, while in government, Minister Belarra justified Podemos’ support for that year’s budget that contained record military spending because, despite Podemos being “strongly

opposed [to] any increase in military spending,” it did not constitute “the majority in government”. It was difficult to turn “stubbornness” into “reality” she added.

In 2015, Podemos recruited Julio Rodríguez, a high-ranking Spanish military officer who had designed Spain’s participation in the imperialist assault on Libya, into their leadership. On joining, Rodríguez made clear: “NATO is necessary, and Podemos will respect its commitments.”

These commitments included increasing military spending, which Podemos fully supported on entering government, as well as unconditional backing for all imperialist ventures and arms shipments to Ukraine.

In March 2022, Podemos supported a resolution in the European Parliament stating that “NATO is the foundation of the collective defence of NATO member states.” Days later, they voted for another resolution declaring that “arms deliveries must continue and intensify so that Ukraine can effectively defend itself.”

Podemos’ founder and leader, Pablo Iglesias, now laments on the pages of his online newspaper *Diario Red* that European imperialism has fallen behind the US and is being excluded from the plundering of Russia and Ukraine. By not having previously prioritised strategic autonomy versus the US, Washington has come out on top: “Now we have to buy gas from the US and pay the bill for the Ukraine war, while the US will take control of rare earth minerals and turn Ukraine into a colony.”

The rearmament programme of the EU defended by all factions of the Spanish ruling class has again exposed the pro-imperialist, anti-worker character of Sumar and Podemos. These pseudo-left groups represent a privileged upper-middle-class stratum which forms a social basis of support for imperialist war. Stopping a catastrophic military escalation requires mobilising the working class against Sumar and Podemos and similar pseudo-left parties across Europe.



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