

Spain's PSOE-Sumar government calls for record military spending without parliamentary debate

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Spain's ruling Socialist Party (PSOE) and the pseudo-left Sumar party are finalising plans to raise military spending to 2 percent of GDP, the largest increase in military spending in history, including that under General Francisco Franco's 1939-1975 fascist dictatorship. While this increase was planned for 2029, the PSOE-Sumar government sped up the timeline amid escalating tensions between the European powers, the United States and Russia.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has already announced his intention to bypass parliament and impose the spending increase by decree in the Council of Ministers, with the full support of Sumar's five ministers.

On Thursday, Sánchez convened Spain's parliamentary parties to discuss behind closed doors his plans to increase defence spending. He met with the leader of the right-wing opposition Popular Party (PP), Alberto Núñez Feijóo, who declared: "Europe must rearm. Spain must do so as well." Feijóo said the PSOE-Sumar government should carry out "serious and clean negotiations" and hold a parliamentary vote to receive PP support.

Sánchez is not refusing to hold a vote due to lack of parliamentary support. The PSOE-Sumar minority government could rely on the PP to support the measure. This would however expose the PSOE's alliance with its pseudo-left allies like Sumar and Podemos, who are implementing policies compatible with the PP. To somewhat conceal the right-wing character of their militarist agenda, the PSOE and Sumar are now trying to approve the spending hike by bypassing a parliamentary vote and imposing it by decree.

Above all, the social democrats and Sumar want to avoid any public debate. There is deep opposition to increasing defence budgets. According to the Center for Sociological Research (CIS) survey conducted in November 2024, only 14.2 percent of respondents supported the state spending "much more" on defence. This contrasted with 50 percent of the population supporting a significant increase in healthcare

and 42 percent for education.

Sánchez has therefore tried to justify the increase in military spending by whipping up unfounded fears of a Russian invasion of Europe. He said:

Spain is prepared to meet the 2 percent target, out of commitment to Europe and solidarity with the countries that are asking for the same help. ... Today, they are asking for that same solidarity so that together we can prevent the threat of Putin's Russia.

These statements are absurd. After three years of war, Russia remains bogged down in Ukraine in a costly and bloody conflict. The increase of defence spending is not aimed at so-called "Russian aggression" but at preparing wars of aggression.

Sánchez also lied, claiming: "Not a single euro will be cut from social policies to meet this commitment to Europe on security and defence." Spain is staggering under an unsustainable debt burden equivalent to 104 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Wherever its cash-strapped government initially finds the funding for its war plans, workers will pay for it through deep cuts in basic social services.

Sánchez also met with the right-wing Basque Nationalist Party leader, Aitor Esteban. Esteban pledged support for the military build-up, declaring that his party "will not engage in domestic political maneuvering on such a serious issue." Meanwhile, the Catalan nationalist Junts party conditioned its support for increased defence spending on greater investment in the Catalan arms industry.

The Catalan and Basque bourgeoisie thus continue their long-standing support for Spanish imperialism—from the plundering of South America and Morocco in the 19th and 20th centuries to their role in securing Spain's entry into the

European Union and NATO, and their backing of US-led neo-colonial wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Balkans, Libya and Syria. Their complicity extends to supporting Israel's genocide against Palestinians and NATO's war against Russia in Ukraine.

Other Catalan and Basque nationalist parties are keeping the door open to supporting the measure. The Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) tried to appear critical while signalling its readiness to compromise. Although the ERC initially postured as opponents of the increase, its spokesperson, Gabriel Rufián, quickly softened his stance, declaring: "The war is here; we must be responsible and go beyond the banner."

The Basque Bildu party issued a vague communiqué pledging to "analyse and debate the new scenario with the depth and seriousness it deserves in order to take a comprehensive position based on our own vision."

Both ERC and Bildu have a record of supporting defence budget increases. Both backed the 2023 budget adopted by the PSOE-Podemos government, which featured what was until now the largest increase in military spending in the country's history.

Sánchez also met with the pseudo-left Podemos party, who ruled together with the PSOE from 2019 to 2023 and still supports the government in parliament. Podemos General Secretary Ione Belarra wore a "no to war" T-shirt and said the increase in defence spending is "a catastrophic mistake." Two days later, she said she was "deeply concerned" by the decisions of Sánchez's government and, addressing Sánchez and other European leaders, said: "Do you like war? Let your children go."

Podemos displays endless hypocrisy. Its supposed pacifism is nothing more than a cynical attempt to distance itself from their split-off, Sumar, to try to regain some of the support it lost while in government. In reality, Podemos is a pro-imperialist and pro-militarist party.

In government, Podemos championed military spending. With its support, the Ministry of Defense's budget went from 1 percent of GDP (€10.2 billion) to 1.3 percent (€19.7 billion) between 2020 and 2023. In 2023, 30 percent of the PSOE-Podemos government's investment budget was allocated to weapons.

Podemos backed NATO-led operations, recruiting General Julio Rodríguez Fernández, who commanded Spain's forces in the 2011 NATO war in Libya. In government, it endorsed the decision to send Leopard 2 tanks and rocket launchers to Ukraine, joining in NATO's war with Russia. It was also complicit in Israel's genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. Spain's arms trade with Israel expanded under the PSOE-Podemos government, including by purchasing Spike missiles.

As Sumar has already committed to backing the PSOE's military spending, Sánchez thanked it for "respecting commitments to Europe and standing firm in this government."

The neo-fascist Vox party was not invited for talks with Sánchez. The PSOE attacks Vox as a pro-Trump party that undercuts plans for war with Russia and military autonomy from Washington.

If Vox has criticized calls for a European military deployment to Ukraine, it does not oppose war or militarism. It glorifies the legacy of General Francisco Franco, who led a coup and commanded fascist forces during the Civil War, massacring hundreds of thousands of workers. It also defends Spain's colonial wars and has fielded multiple former Spanish NATO generals involved in interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and the Balkans.

Vox Vice President Ignacio Garriga said it "has always defended the need to increase defence spending," calling it not an expense but an "investment."

The PSOE-Sumar government's push for record military spending without public debate underscores its deep integration into the imperialist war plans of NATO and the European Union. No faction of the political establishment opposes war and militarism. PSOE, Sumar, Podemos or the Catalan and Basque nationalist parties are united in backing the Spanish bourgeoisie's warmongering.

The working class must reject militarism and war and the austerity that will inevitably accompany it. The fight against war requires a break from all capitalist parties and the building of an independent socialist movement that unites workers across Europe and internationally in opposition to imperialism.



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