

Spain's Socialist Party-Sumar government faces collapse amid corruption scandal, war drive, and rising class struggle

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Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE) and Sumar coalition government, led by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, is engulfed in a deepening corruption scandal that threatens to bring down the administration.

The mounting crisis is raising the prospect of snap elections which, according to most polls, would likely hand power to the right-wing Popular Party (PP) and the far-right Vox.

At the centre of the allegations is Santos Cerdán, one of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez's closest allies and, until last week, the Secretary of Organisation for the PSOE. Cerdán resigned after being linked to a widening corruption probe led by the Guardia Civil, which uncovered a network of kickbacks, influence peddling, and profiteering tied to public contracts.

The case is closely linked to the "Koldo case," centred on former Transport Minister José Luis Ábalos and his long-time aide Koldo García. Investigators accuse them of funnelling millions in illicit commissions through shell companies during the pandemic, including for overpriced face masks and infrastructure contracts.

Sánchez's reassurances to his parliamentary allies that the scandal is limited to the "toxic triangle" of Cerdán, Ábalos, and García have failed to convince. Catalan nationalist ERC leader Gabriel Rufián warned of a "sense of end of cycle". The Basque Nationalist Party refused to say whether the governing majority can hold. Its spokesperson Maribel Vaquero warned: "Each day brings new revelations. We will be prudent." Even pseudo-left Sumar took its distance, with their minister Pablo Bustinduy declaring that the PSOE's explanations were "clearly insufficient".

This is not merely a corruption case, but part of a broader process through which the ruling class is reconfiguring its political strategy. The scandal engulfing Sánchez's government is being used not only to settle internal disputes within the political establishment, but to prepare the ground for a realignment aimed at imposing deeper austerity, intensified repression of the working class, and a full-scale turn to militarism.

In 2018, the PSOE came to power through a no-confidence vote backed by Podemos, using the PP's Bárcenas corruption scandal, another kickback scheme involving construction firms, to oust Mariano Rajoy and stabilise the regime. The real objective was to reorient the state in the aftermath of the 2017 Catalan independence referendum, which had plunged Spanish capitalism into crisis. The PP's brutal crackdown on October 1, leaving over

1,000 injured, and the jailing of Catalan leaders shattered the political equilibrium that had sustained the post-Franco order. The PSOE was brought in to defuse the Catalan crisis and restore political control.

Today, the same logic is playing out. The Spanish ruling class faces an existential crisis. It is being squeezed by mounting international pressures and intensifying class struggle at home.

The global trade war led by US President Donald Trump has placed Spain's economy in a vulnerable position. According to the Chamber of Commerce, new US tariffs could affect €22 billion in bilateral trade, inflicting losses of up to €4.3 billion. Nearly 28,000 companies could be directly impacted, particularly in core sectors like infrastructure, machinery, metallurgy, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, agribusiness and textiles.

At the same time, NATO is intensifying its demands for unprecedented increases in military spending. In a letter sent last week, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte called on all member states to raise defence spending to a staggering 5 percent of GDP.

For Spain, this would mean diverting an additional €80 billion annually, nearly half the country's total pension budget, towards war preparations. Sánchez has already imposed sweeping pension cuts, regressive labour reforms, and passed the largest military budgets in Spain's recent history. But for the ruling class and its imperialist backers, this is only the beginning, prompting Sánchez to oppose the mandatory target as "unreasonable but also counterproductive" and a threat to Spain's economy.

Whatever the outcome, the European Union's rearmament drive and NATO's global war campaign aimed at its three interconnected fronts—Russia in Eastern Europe, China in the Pacific and also the violent reshaping of the Middle East—demands deeper austerity, privatisations, and intensified domestic repression. Israel's war with Iran could push oil prices 20 percent above baseline forecasts, triggering a new inflationary wave that would further erode workers' living standards across Europe.

The ruling class has already shown its willingness to prioritise NATO's demands over social spending, but fears whether the PSOE-Sumar coalition, the weakest in the post-Franco era, depending on the support of five parties in parliament, is strong enough to impose the next wave of cuts without sparking uncontrollable revolt.

The escalating social crisis, driven by spiralling rents,

unaffordable mortgages and stagnant wages, has already ignited a nationwide wave of protests and strikes. In Cantabria, 22,000 metalworkers launched a strike that the unions rapidly shut down, fearing its convergence with a strike of 26,000 metalworkers in Cádiz that began weeks later. In Cartagena, 20,000 more metalworkers are entering a new round of bargaining, intersecting with growing unrest among workers in A Coruña and at the Navantia shipyards.

The metal sector is just one front in a broader class offensive: 9,500 workers at the energy giant Iberdrola are on strike, EasyJet flight crews and doctors are mobilising across the country for better pay and conditions, teachers in Asturias are demanding wage increases, and workers at the supermarket chain Alcampo and at Caixabank are resisting mass job cuts.

For now, the PP, the only party in parliament with enough seats to table a no-confidence motion, has opted against doing so. Spokesman Borja Sémper argued that such a move would only offer a “breath of oxygen to Sanchismo” and “distract from the focus,” signalling that the PP at this point prefers a strategy of attrition. Rather than force a vote it cannot win because it lacks enough parliamentary support, the PP aims to organise media attacks and street mobilisations, pressuring Sánchez to call snap elections on his own. “It may be a slow agony,” Sémper admitted, “but it will be more painful.”

The PSOE could also initiate a vote of confidence. With a razor-thin parliamentary majority of 152 seats held by the PSOE and Sumar in the 350-seat parliament, Sánchez would risk everything on the assumption that five parties backing it in parliament would hold the line.

Within the PSOE, calls are growing for snap elections. This has been championed by former Prime Minister Felipe González, who ruled from 1982 to 1996, and Emilio García-Page, the influential regional president of Castilla-La Mancha. González publicly backed Page’s call for early elections ahead of the scheduled municipal and regional polls in May 2027.

González played a central role in ousting Sánchez as PSOE general secretary in 2016, orchestrating an internal coup that enabled the party to abstain in a parliamentary vote and allow the PP to take power. This operation, carried out in the interests of the Spanish bourgeoisie after two inconclusive elections and nine months of political deadlock, trampled party rules and the popular will and was driven by a full-scale media campaign against Sánchez.

Now González has returned to the spotlight, using the corruption scandal to press for a government more aligned with NATO’s escalating demands. “Some people think the best defence policy is to spend nothing on defence or security... they want to declare peace to the world... and if they don’t believe us, well, fuck them. Let them attack us—we won’t defend ourselves. It’s ridiculous,” he said.

On Monday, Sánchez pledged support for anti-corruption measures demanded by his parliamentary backers to maintain power and avoid, in his words, “handing power to the right and far right.” He described his administration as a “historic achievement,” declaring, “We will not allow the possible corruption of a few to bring down the most progressive

government in the EU.”

This rhetoric cannot conceal that the PSOE-Sumar government has implemented sweeping austerity, repressive labour reforms, and record military spending while supporting NATO’s war against Russia in Ukraine and its complicity with Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

The decisive issue facing the Spanish working class is that while it is beginning to move industrially, it remains politically voiceless. The strikes and protests breaking out across the country are led by the same treacherous union federations, CCOO and UGT, aligned with the government. These bureaucracies act as labour police, suppressing anger, isolating struggles, and protecting the capitalist state.

In the 2023 elections, the WSWS warned that no support should be given to the PSOE and Sumar in the name of opposing the far right. We insisted that only an independent political movement of the working class could fight austerity, militarism, and dictatorship. That warning has been vindicated. The very parties hailed as a “progressive alternative” have spent two years clearing the path for the far right to return to power.

This pattern is not unique to Spain. In the US, the Democrats prepared the ground for Donald Trump’s return. In Germany, the Social Democrats, Greens and the Left Party paved the way for the most militarist and far-right government since the Second World War under Friedrich Merz. In Britain, Starmer’s Labour Party is indistinguishable from the Tories. The turn by the ruling class toward fascism and dictatorship flows from an economic system wracked by deepening inequality, social decay, and global war.

Workers and young people seeking a way forward must turn to the International Committee of the Fourth International. The task is to study its history and programme and build a section in Spain to prepare the leadership needed to fight for a socialist future.



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