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Spain Past and Present

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### Reflecting on Spain's Democratic Journey: 1814-1936

The early 19th century through the early 20th century was a time of chaos and confusion for Spain and its government. The 19th century's struggles arose from land distribution and who would be in charge of Spain, but the decisions were being made by the higher-ups. Moving into the 20th century, power was still a struggle, but the people were the main drivers of change.

The 19th Century was a time of chaos for Spain. To begin, Spain's closest neighbor and kin, the French, just ended the revolution in their country. The Enlightenment played a large role in this revolution as it started questioning everything, including the way society was established and the way that the people were ruled. During this time, Spain was ruled by Charles IV; however, most of the responsibilities were given to the prime minister, Manuel Godoy. In 1808, the Motín de Aranjuez took Godoy out of power and placed the crown in the hands of Fernando VII, the son of the king and queen. This is where the chaos begins. Napoleon, the leader of France, forced Fernando to give the crown back to Charles IV. He then invaded Spain and took the crown to give to his brother, Joseph Bonaparte. Following the change in power, there was an uprising within the regions. Each region created its assembly of rebels, and they joined together to create a general assembly. With support from Britain and Portugal, the Spanish assemblies were able to reject the French invasion, to gain representation

for the people within the government. There were positive and negative impacts; the French supporters were exiled from Spain, but there was a total of 500,000 Spanish casualties. This caused an agricultural decline as most of the rebellion's soldiers consisted of farmers.

In an attempt to establish a new government, a constitution was created in 1812 that established national sovereignty, separation of powers, abolished the absolute monarchy, and kept Roman Catholicism as the sole religion of the country. This constitution was never implemented, as it was abolished by Ferdinand VII. Following his death, his daughter Isabella II came into power; her mother and General Regencia de Espartero took on her responsibilities until she was thirteen. Conflict ensued once again, this time between people who believed Charles should be in power (Carlists) and supporters of Isabella. Following her rule, a new liberal constitution was created that focused on voting rights and representation for the people. Additionally, in 1870, a new monarch was brought in, Amadeo de Saboya from Italy. More protests from Carlists continued with anger for taking the monarchy out of the family, and Saboya gave the crown back to the nation in 1873. This led to the creation of the short-lived Spanish Republic, in which there were 5 presidents in one year. So, the monarchy was restored in 1874 with Alfonso XII, and kicked off the period of restoration. There was an industrial revolution, a new constitution, and the implementation of a two-party system. Two parties emerged, the liberals who supported reforms and democracy, and the conservatives who heavily supported the church and social order. Things were going well for Spain until 1898. The Spanish-American War led to the loss of Spain's last overseas territories, Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, to the US. The 19th

century was a time of chaos, war, and loss for Spain, with a complex shift in power and beliefs.

Moving into the 20th century, there was a plethora of events over a very short period that shaped Spain's government for the rest of history. Anarchism was on the rise within the workers' regions; they were against the upper class and formed workers' unions. Alfonso XIII became the king of Spain in 1902. The Republican majority began within the government, and socialist idealisms were suppressed. During his time, he intervened heavily in politics with ideas and reforms to bring order to the country. The liberal and conservative powers were alternating, but this was a time of rigged elections and corruption within the government. Political division continued throughout his reign, and the republicans began to lead with an authoritarian iron fist. 1917 became a notable year for the Spanish government, as social unrest began and opposition to the government grew. The unions began to strike, and soldiers started to oppose the government's policies. Workers' movements from the socialist parties caused more and more social conflict.

In 1921, the army was defeated in Morocco, causing a rift in the military, leading to disbelief in the government. With this, a Coup d'état went into motion. In 1923, Alfonso XIII approved the Coup d'état led by General Primo de Rivera that brought the military dictatorship of Spain. The coup overthrew the government and put Primo de Rivera in power. This new reign abolished the previous constitution, stripped the workers of their rights, and abolished the political parties within the parliament. This government remained successful until 1930.

The people of Spain became weary of the legitimacy of the Monarchy and its association with military dictatorship. The elections of 1931 showed that the monarch had lost its power. A provisional government was put into place, followed by elections later that year, thus marking the beginning of the Second Republic. During this new republic, the public wanted to see democratic reforms. The government was led by right-wing politicians who supported the church and were in favor of capitalism and classism. Nationalist parties formed amongst the people and within the army, and socialist parties formed within the working classes. The lower-class citizens were in opposition to the church as they saw it as an ally to the people who owned the farms that they worked on. Social unrest began to increase, and mobs with fires destroyed churches across the country. This was just the beginning. As army reforms were put into place, there was opposition from the higher-ranking officers, specifically General Francisco Franco. He gained his notoriety from his impressive suppression of a socialist rebellion in 1934. By 1936, there was extreme tension and division. It was said that it was so bad that the socialists and the right-wing supporters couldn't even see each other without getting upset. The parties were heavily divided, and there were surges of unrest and violence through strikes and street clashes. The sides were so divided that they resorted to political violence. A socialist leader, Jose Castillo, was murdered following the communist parade of 1936. Immediately following, right-wing leader Jose Calvo Sotero was suspected of the murder, the police arrested him, and he too was murdered. This kicked off yet another military Coup led by General Francisco Franco, in which the government was overthrown, and he began his long dictatorship.

In conclusion, the 19th and 20th centuries were riddled with political conflict and confusion. The power was first distributed by the people in charge, like the monarchy and Napoleon. However, as time went on, the Spanish people became restless under the iron fist of the monarchy and military, and decided they needed power in the leadership decisions. They began to formulate their ideas of what leadership would look like, which caused conflict not only with the government but within the regions as well. This time of political and social unrest affected generations of Spaniards, causing a separation of political ideologies that has extended into modern times.