

# Francisco franco, the ultimate fascist dictator



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Fascism can be defined as a political system with centralization of power under a single-party dictatorship. Fascist dictators maintain authority through strict socioeconomic controls, suppression of the masses through censorship and terrorism, and policies of aggressive nationalism and racism (“Fascism”). Francisco Franco first implemented this government policy in Spain after witnessing its achievements in Germany and Italy. Franco’s strong nationalistic and military upbringing was the basis for his fascist dictatorship.

What made Franco the “ultimate fascist dictator” was the fact that he was more palatable to the western countries. His focus was not on world domination, but rather on the consolidation of his own country. Based on his own ideas of what true Spanish values should be, he took steps to oppress the Spanish people and to unify them as a national socialistic mentality under a fascist regime.

### The Spanish Civil War and Aftermath

During the Spanish Civil war, Francisco Franco served as General of the Nationalists. This party was comprised of parts of the army and former supporters of the Second Spanish Republic. The Republicans, which was the opposing party, consisted of all the members of the former republic (“The Spanish Case”). While fighting against the Republicans, General Franco was made leader of the Falange party. The Falange, established by Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, preached the ideals of Italian Fascism.

The Falange disdained all forms of socialism and democracy. The party was later declared the only legal political party in Spain in 1939 (Payne, 1999). After the Civil War, Franco’s number one priority was to inflict unity and <https://assignbuster.com/francisco-franco-the-ultimate-fascist-dictator/>

order in his country. Thousands of former Republicans were immediately shot or jailed while countless others fell victim to other forms of political and economic punishments (" Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly"). Wise and crafty, Franco took advantage of divisions in his administration to prevent any one-group form becoming too powerful. Franco began to create a new type of dictatorial state, which he planned to rule when the Spanish Civil War ended. He would call his dictatorial state the Nuevo Estado. As el Caudillo, the Spanish ruler, he had final say over all matters economic, social, diplomatic, political, and cultural (Jensen, 2005). While an authoritative and highly feared man, he could not carry out his authority on his own. In fact, he relied heavily on the support of several organizations to help carry out his mission.

#### State and Party Organizations

Support from the Falange, the church, and most importantly, the military, made the continuation of his leadership possible. While the military did not necessarily make the policies, they had a heavy hand in making sure they were carried out (Jensen, 2005, p98). Fascism required absolute devotion to the state and specifically, to Franco as Spain's leader. In order to solidify and validate his rule, Francisco Franco sought the recognition of the Catholic Church. Getting the church's support was not that difficult because of Franco's strong anti-communist views. With the backing of the church in a devoutly catholic country, the people found it hard to question Franco's rule (Cowans, 2003).

#### Restrictions on Spanish Society

One of Franco's first steps in building his new system of government, the *Nuevo Estado*, was to issue the Decree of Unification in 1937. This order gave Franco supreme authority to merge all Nationalists and monarchists into one party, the Falange (Cowans, 2003). Franco implemented several fundamental laws during his rule as a façade of constitutionalism. The majority of the laws were developed to legitimize existing issues or to reinforce his authority. The Labor Charter implemented corporatist policies to control working conditions, prices, wages, production and exchange (Cowans, 2003). Franco consolidated the labor force by unifying all trade union groups allied with Nationalists into one large organization called the *Organización Sindical Española* (" Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly").

Franco believed that by consolidating the working class and the trade unions under one organization, he would create a better relationship between worker and employee under his rule. Typical to fascist rule, Franco limited the freedoms of his people. Spanish citizens were stripped of their basic rights and freedoms including freedom of speech and freedom of association. Franco considered criticism a crime, therefore opposing political parties were outlawed and universal suffrage was eliminated (" Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly"). Franco's intention was to preserve his regime's principles and isolate Spanish culture from foreign influences. In order to achieve that goal, censorship was enforced by the Book Censorship section, the Cinema and Theater Department and the Information and Censorship section (English-Spanish).

The influence of the Franco regime on school curricular and school textbook contents was used as part of a rigorous brain washing exercise (“ Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly”). As an attempt to impress the world’s democratic powers, Franco issued a fundamental law that granted a bill of rights, the Charter of Rights (“ Spain – THE FRANCO YEARS”). The rights were more for show than anything else. The charter placed a strong emphasis on the Spanish duty to serve their country and to obey the laws. They did not give the Spaniards any additional rights, for guaranteeing freedom of expression still had implications of not criticizing the authority.

### The Organic Laws

He endorsed his rule by passing a series of supposed Organic Laws of the State between 1938 and 1967. The Organic Laws incorporated no major changes but were meant to clarify existing policies while allowing for some degree of modification. The laws continued to define Franco’s authoritative control over every aspect of Spanish politics, economy, and society, but also established a separation between the functions of the prime minister and the head of state (“ Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly”).

They were designed to modernize the Spanish system and present an attempt to move toward democracy (“ Spain – THE FRANCO YEARS”). Nevertheless, they retained the basic structure of Franco’s authoritarian system. Of all the Organic Laws, the 1947 Law of Succession had the most extensive consequences. This law determined the future of Franco’s political system (“ Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly”). The law formally declared the Spanish state a Catholic, social, and representative monarchy

that Franco would rule until his death or inability to rule. It also granted Franco the right to name his own successor.

### Foreign Policy under Franco

Franco constantly delayed his entrance into World War II. There would be negotiations between Hitler and Franco in which Franco would express his interest in entering the war but that Spain needed more raw materials and other assistance in order to have their military be significant enough (Payne, 1999). Franco always had his hand out and was always asking for aid. In addition, Franco wanted assurances from Hitler that he would be promised land or sovereignty in northwest Africa. It was always a stall tactic with Franco. Hitler's underlings never thought that Germany's relationship with Spain would ever amount to an official alliance in the war (Payne, 1999).

Part of Franco's charm as a fascist was the way he was able to pick and choose his involvement in World War II. While he admired Hitler and Mussolini and was able to secure military support from them to achieve his personal goals, Franco did very little to support the Axis powers, except when it came to fighting communism. By avoiding direct involvement in World War II, Franco spared Spain and its people the hardships that come with war (Cowans, 2003).

Franco's Spain became politically and economically isolated from the rest of Europe in the years to follow. To further claim that Franco had the ultimate staying power as ruler of Spain, he was able to lead his country in post World War II Europe by maintaining his ideas and slowly introducing Spain to a world economy. In doing so, he was able to prolong his reign and give the people a small taste of prosperity. Franco allowed Spain to gradually reenter <https://assignbuster.com/francisco-franco-the-ultimate-fascist-dictator/>

the international community, which helped to stabilize his dictatorship. All throughout the 1950s, Franco fought to preserve the totalitarian system that he had presided over since the civil war (Jensen, 2005). He continued to rely on the military, the Catholic Church and the politically high-ranking right-wing families.

### Franco's Opposition

Even at the height of his reign, Franco continued to suppress all signs of regionalism, liberal politics, and left-wing trade unionism to ensure total control (" Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly"). By the end of the 1950s, faults were found in Franco's authoritarian system, which caused it to begin to decline. The weakening economic conditions sparked groups who opposed Franco to form with hopes to challenge Franco's power (" Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly").

The most violent act of opposition during the Franco regime occurred in the late 1960s from a revolutionary Basque nationalist group. The group used methods of terror to express their demands for regional sovereignty (" Spain - THE FRANCO YEARS"). Their most extreme act was the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco. Blanco was appointed by Franco as his first prime minister. Blanco was expected to carry out Franco's policies and this act of terror interrupted the stability of the reign(" Spain - THE FRANCO YEARS"). An economic reversal came about in the mid-1960s, bringing wealth to Franco's middle-class followers. On the other hand, Franco was under global and national pressure to direct Spain in a more democratic direction.

Franco's response was to issue an Organic Law in 1967 that put restrictions on the powers and functions of his position and that of his successor

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(Cowans, 2003). Nevertheless, he did preserve absolute veto power, which allowed him to overrule any reforms that threatened to challenge his influence. Therefore, the law of 1967 resulted in only surface changes, which were designed to improve Spain's image to others and give the Spanish people the perception that Spain was moving toward democracy (" Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly"). His popularity, however, continued to decline because he failed to renew the underlying political and social structures of his regimes (Jensen, 2005).

### Conclusion

Because of Francisco Franco's isolationist demands on Spain and its people, the economy eventually started to collapse. Political and social opposition, including progressive parts of the Catholic Church, exploited falling wages and rising prices, which forced Franco to slowly allow Spain to participate in the global economy (Jensen, 2005). The fact that he was able to recognize this and his ability to remotely compromise insured his continued reign. The help that he provided to his people was in fact another way to make him look like the hero and secure his position. With the combination of his ideas and a part of a population willing to support him, Franco was able to leave his mark as a successful fascist dictator, surpassing all those who had inspired him.

What makes Franco the more palatable fascist was that he had the opportunity to die at the ripe old age of 82, whereas Hitler committed suicide and Mussolini was killed by the people of Italy and hung up by his heels. In both of the cases with Hitler and Mussolini, both countries were tired of war and were looking to rebuild their nations and their relationships with the rest of the world. Franco had the luxury of a funeral and of a population grieving



for him. After Franco's death, his successor came to power with hopes of democratic reform.