

Time to Get Hold of the Republican Movement in Spain

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Eurocrisis in the
Press

By [Alfonso Valero](#)

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Following the [abdication](#) of Spanish king Juan Carlos I, surprisingly close to the ground-breaking results of the [European elections](#), a relatively marginal [debate](#) of Monarchy vs. Republic has been re-opened in Spain. These confrontations are deeply rooted in Spanish history – for the last two centuries Spain has had two well defined opposed fronts for almost any aspects of political life – but the underlining principle seems to be missed by the [Spanish media](#) which is part and parcel of that tension.



The Spanish republican movement has been traditionally inspired by reminiscences of the [Second Spanish Republic](#) which took place between 1931 and 1939, when it was effectively completely defeated by the uprising of General Franco (in 1936) which led to the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). The collective memory of that republican period is mixed, but in view of the – [apparent](#) – majority in support of the monarchy, the balance falls against it. The substantial recent change has been that a number of [corruption cases](#) affecting The Spanish Royal Family and the significant [social movement](#) against the current system (i.e. anti-system, but not necessarily violent revolution) has led to a number of supporters demanding a republic not necessarily to emulate the Second Republic, but to remove the so-called [casta](#) (caste).

Against this movement there is not necessarily a compact group of die-hard monarchist supporters; in fact, I doubt they are even lukewarm towards the idea of a king or queen. Their main motivation to oppose is based on and fed by [fear](#). The arguments thrown against republicans are nothing to do with republic itself, but rather along the lines of: changing the current system is not ideal in a situation of separatism, the proponents of republic are revolutionaries inspired (and funded) by Bolivarians (i.e. Venezuelan-inspired republic) and that monarchy was voted when the Spanish constitution was approved (in 1978).

It is remarkable that no support has been shown to the republican movement from political parties aside of the [extreme left](#). In due course, this may be a complete underestimation by the rest of the political parties which were already surprised by the social response to new ideas by Podemos.

In reality, those small and rising parties like [UPyD](#) and [Ciudadanos](#) could do well to get hold of the opportunity to present a thought-out republican model which would have no inspiration in the former republic, but in a creative and austere republic.

Most of the European monarchies and republics are based in an evolved traditional model of absolute monarchy. The king had to be controlled, so a government was created to take away from the monarch the executive power. The king needed money to fund public expenditure, so parliament would request to see the proposals and approve the taxes. Even in most European republics (e.g. Italy, France, Ireland), the President of the Republic resembles more a former king or queen coexisting with a government and a parliament than a proper separation of powers. In America, however, and also explained by the historical reason of a republic inspired in a (old) European system, the President of the Republic is also the President of the Government.

In reality the American model makes more sense. Separation between Head of the State and Head of Government doesn't make political sense except where there is a monarchy. Additionally, when the executive power is separated from the legislative power (Parliament), then it is right to separate the vote for it. Currently in most European countries citizens are called to vote once every so often and from that vote a President of Government is chosen

from amongst the leading members of Parliament. That of course means that, save for exceptional situations, the Executive power will encounter almost no opposition from the Legislative power.

In Spain things are even more intricate since Parliament also chooses the judges for the highest courts of the country. Add the common fact that parties in Parliament vote in block and that the electoral lists are closed, then you have a democracy controlled by political parties. Accordingly, Spaniards vote for their Parliament, Government and judges all at once. No wonder some feel that their opinion doesn't count. Compound things even further when you add that government in Spain has a say in almost anything from media licenses to energy licenses. The power conferred by one vote is immense.

Government, whether within a monarchy or not, should be elected directly with its members not being members of Parliament. The executive should be given the relevant powers to govern and when their actions need to be developed by statute, then would need to make a proposal to Parliament. Parliament, in turn, doesn't need to be bi-cameral or even overcrowded as it is at the moment. Number of heads in the parliament gives an appearance of democracy, but when all parties vote in block there is no need for so many members. Judges, as with any reasonable democratic spirit, cannot and should not be elected or appointed by the other branches of power.

That's why fear for a change of system is completely unfounded. The opportunity is there for grabs and the small parties should step forward to show that they are not only reformist, but also unafraid to tackle the big questions of representation.

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Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the Euro Crisis in the Press blog, nor of the London School of Economics.

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