

DOI: 10.20542/0131-2227-2023-67-3-44-54

EDN: NGXWFG

SPANISH SOCIETY: STABLE INSTABILITY

Sergey M. KHENKIN,
ORCID 0000-0003-2137-2113, sergkhenkin@mail.ru
Moscow State Institute of International Relations, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation
(MGIMO University), 76, Vernadskogo Prosp., Moscow, 119454, Russian Federation;
Institute of Scientific Information on Social Sciences, Russian Academy of Sciences (INION RAS), 51/21,
Nakhimovskii Prosp., Moscow, 117418, Russian Federation.

Received 27.11.2022. Revised 09.12.2022. Accepted 26.12.2022.

Abstract. Instability has become a “new normal” for Spain. This relatively young democracy with numerous semiperipheral traits is seeing new challenges overlap the long-standing old ones, which makes instability greater than in more developed European Union countries. The article is the first Russian academic paper to cover the entirety of destabilizing factors in contemporary Spanish society. Among the destabilizers one can identify those that may be traced back to Spain’s historical past. These include polarization of opinions on the legacy of the Civil War and the Franco regime, elements of authoritarian attitudes in mass consciousness and political practices of organizations, as well as conflicts between supporters of monarchy and the republican movement, between avid Catholics and secularists. Another contributing factor is fragility of the political system that shows itself in personalist (caudillist) parties, whose mechanisms for intra-party democracy are still immature. There is also a disproportionate electoral legislation, politicized judiciary, and the unfinished nation state that has failed to truly integrate Catalonia and the Basque Country. Another destabilizer is volatile social and economic development. Spain has one of the highest rates of unemployment and precarious employment in the EU, intensive growth of precariat, flawed healthcare and education systems, immigration galvanizing both indigenous nationalism and xenophobia, with the reluctance of many immigrants to adapt to Spanish culture and society. Minimizing risks related to destabilizing factors is an imperative for Spain’s present and future.

Keywords: Spain, built-in destabilizers, political parties, electoral system, judiciary, unfinished nation state, unemployment, precarious employment.

About author:

Sergey M. KHENKIN, Dr. Sci. (History), Professor, Principal Researcher.

ИСПАНСКИЙ СОЦИУМ: СТАБИЛЬНАЯ НЕСТАБИЛЬНОСТЬ

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ХЕНКИН Сергей Маркович, доктор исторических наук, профессор,
ORCID 0000-0003-2137-2113, sergkhenkin@mail.ru
МГИМО МИД России, РФ, 119454 Москва, пр-т Вернадского, 76;
ИНИОН РАН, РФ, 117418 Москва, Нахимовский пр-т, 51/21.

Статья поступила 27.11.2022. После доработки 09.12.2022. Принята к печати 26.12.2022.

Аннотация. Нестабильность превратилась в норму жизни испанского общества. В этой стране относительно молодой демократии с многочисленными следами полупериферийности новые вызовы накладываются на нерешенные старые проблемы, отчего нестабильность проявляется острее, чем в более развитых государствах Евросоюза. В статье впервые в отечественной литературе воссоздана совокупность факторов нестабильности в современном испанском социуме: проблемы, перешедшие к демократии по наследству от предшествующих эпох; уязвимые места современной политической системы, в том числе недостроенность национального государства; неустойчивость социально-экономического развития. Минимизация рисков, связанных с факторами дестабилизации, представляется необходимой для нынешнего и будущего развития испанского социума.

Ключевые слова: Испания, встроенные дестабилизаторы, партии, избирательная система, судебная власть, недостроенность национального государства, безработица, непостоянная занятость, прекариат.

INTRODUCTION

Instability and the associated unpredictability of development have become characteristic features of the present-day world. Social disturbances in Europe have especially affected countries that also previously had many problem areas, both visible and obscure disparities in development. Countries of Southern Europe, in particular, Spain, are notable in this regard. This country entered the path of capitalist modernization later than others, which explains its lagging behind the leading European countries. Elements of modernity and traditionalism coexisted in the social order and mentality of the population, which destabilized the situation, heightened the degree of tension, and made Spain a scene of crises, social unrest, revolutions, and civil wars.

The democratic regime, established in the second half of the 1980s, initially seemed stable and effective. Nevertheless, the global crisis, and then the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Ukrainian conflict, brought to light many unresolved problems, both new and inherited from the past. Instability is inseparably associated with the fragmentation of society and the presence of many dividing lines within it.

This paper attempts to analyze the factors destabilizing the sociopolitical situation in Spain in their totality, which appears to be of utmost importance in reconstructing a holistic picture of Spain's modern development. When writing this paper, the author used new material and also relied on his previously published works, dedicated to different aspects of the considered issue [1, 2, 3, 4].

DESTABILIZING FACTORS: THE LEGACY OF THE PAST

The transition from the Francoist dictatorship to representative democracy in the second half of the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s laid the foundations of the modern Spanish state. For many years, this transition was regarded as a benchmark, and the ruling elites of a number of countries saw it as a model to follow. Meanwhile, in Spain itself, even during the transition to democracy, a revisionist trend emerged, which gained strength during the global crisis. The representatives of this trend believe that the transition was reduced to a

“superficial reconstruction of the political façade” of Francoism [1, p. 84].

Both these approaches are extremes with which it is hard to agree. The peculiarity of the transition in Spain was that it took place without destroying the old state machinery, but the gradual transformation of the institutions, legislation, and political practices of Francoism changed the nature of the regime. The core part of the transition included the agreements between the government of the Francoist-renovationist Adolfo Suárez and the leftist opposition (first and foremost, the Communist Party of Spain (*Partido Comunista de España* – PCE) and Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español* – PSOE). The authorities, with the support of the left-wing forces, managed to implement democratization and avoid a repetition of the fratricidal civil war, the fear of which was very high in society. Meanwhile, the results of the transition process did not satisfy some part of the left-wing forces, aiming at profound social transformations.

Transit, in fact, did not solve many problems, in particular, those that were inherited from the past. They manifested themselves already at the stage of consolidated democracy and became a serious factor in social destabilization.

One of the unsolved problems was the treatment of the historical past (beginning with the civil war of 1936–1939). In the transition stage, the crimes of the dictatorship were not talked about. The left and right wings did not touch upon this potentially explosive topic (the so-called unspoken pact of oblivion). In Spain, unlike the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, there were no lustrations. Suárez's reforms concerned only institutions. The specific feature of the transition process was the compromise between the Francoists-renovationists and the anti-Francoists, which created obstacles for punishing the offenders and restoring historical justice.

The loyalty of most right-wing forces to the new democratic order was to a large extent due to the Amnesty Law (1977). According to this law, amnesty was granted for all political crimes committed before 1977, including the massacres of anti-Franco activists. The law exempted those guilty of the dictatorship crimes from prosecution, at the same time giving the latter a semblance of legality. Due to this law, many former Francoists recog-

nized the transition to democracy and accepted a number of important concessions to the leftist opposition [2, pp. 75-76].

In the context of the national reconciliation logic, the idea of the “equal responsibility” of the left and the right for the tragic events of the past became widespread. The past events were perceived as a result of “collective insanity”, which should be forgotten. “There was a strong conviction in a large part of society that ‘burial of the past’ was the only way to guarantee a peaceful transition to democracy”, notes the Spanish author Montoto Ugarte [5, p. 31]. Due to this, the perpetrators of crimes under the Franco regime were not punished in the first decades of democracy, and the merits of those who fought against this regime were not recognized.

At the official level, a turning point in the attitudes toward the recent past took place under the PSOE government headed by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. In October 2007, the Law on recognizing and expanding rights and establishing measures in favor of those who suffered persecution or violence during the civil war and the dictatorship, known as the Historical Memory Law for short, was passed. It was developed and supplemented by the Democratic Memory Law, approved in October 2022 by the left-wing coalition government of PSOE and the *Unidas Podemos* bloc headed by Pedro Sánchez.

The Democratic Memory Law, among other things, qualifies the Francoist regime as illegitimate. The victims of the regime are recognized as having the right to compensation for material damage caused to them and public recognition, and their relatives will be paid reparations. The search for those who went missing during the Civil War and the Francoist regime will continue, and a DNA databank to identify the dead will be created. The government intends to approve a Democratic Memory Plan setting forth the goals and priorities for implementing this policy with appropriate funding. The date of October 31 is declared the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Military Coup, War, and Dictatorship. A change in the role of the above-mentioned 1977 Amnesty Law, which played a great role in national reconciliation, is of crucial importance. This law remains in force, but it is noted that there is a need to “guarantee the right to the establishment of the truth in respect of

victims of serious violations of human rights or international humanitarian law” [source 1].

The right-wing opposition, in particular the People’s Party (*Partido Popular*, PP), violently opposed both laws. Conservatives claimed that PSOE, based on electoral calculations, destroyed national harmony and returned society to the confrontation between the “two Spains”, opening wounds that had already healed [6]. Being in power from 2011–2018, PP refused to implement the provisions of the Historical Memory Law.

Thus, the issue of historical memory politicizes and disintegrates Spanish society, which prevents the achievement of true national harmony. Different political forces interpret the events of the past differently, using them as an argument in the public struggle. A compromise in this respect is unlikely to be found in the foreseeable future [2, p. 83].

Another issue, rooted in the centuries-old imperial past, is the elements of the traditional “authoritarian complex” in the mass consciousness. This complex historically manifested itself in the political apathy of numerous population groups, their detachment from participation in the political process, combined with great reverence for a person endowed with power, and the perception of dirigiste leadership methods as quite natural. One can also mention here the practice of patron-client relations, which has taken root in society.

In the stage of the establishment and consolidation of democracy, the powerful force of inertia ensured the preservation of many elements of the authoritarian tradition in Spanish political life. The way of dismantling the dictatorship “from above” by Suárez’s government restrained the initiative of the “grassroots”. The heads of the leading parties did not seek an open and broad discussion of acute national problems, giving preference to behind-the-scenes negotiations.

The consolidation of representative democracy did not result in the elimination of the “authoritarian complex”. Authoritarianism was “built into” the mechanism of the new statehood, and a number of democratic institutions were deprived of real content. However, it should be emphasized that the authoritarian tradition manifests itself in both right-wing and left-wing political cultures.

A factor of social destabilization inherited from the past is the dilemma of a “monarchy or

republic". In the history of Spain, there have been many collisions between supporters of the monarchy (rights) and republicans (left). The outstanding role of King Juan Carlos I during the years of transition, when he initiated democratic changes, encouraged socialists and communists to reconsider the traditional attitude toward the institution of the monarchy. The recognition of the monarchy was accompanied by the recognition that the main contradiction in society at the time was "democracy or dictatorship", not "monarchy or republic".

At the same time, a consensus regarding the form of government has not been achieved in society. The pro-monarchist part of the public is convinced that the country needs an arbitrator who is "above the fray" and is able to settle acute conflicts. By contrast, the Republicans adhere to the opinion that an unelected hereditary monarchy, financed with taxpayers' money, whose representatives are far from the real problems of the people, is an anachronism [7, p. 63].

The Republicans became much more active in the last years of Juan Carlos' reign and after his abdication in June 2014. In that period, the monarch's prestige fell sharply because of corruption scandals within the royal family, including those associated with him personally. At the time of Juan Carlos' abdication, there were mass demonstrations across the country in support of a referendum on the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of the Third Republic. The current King Felipe VI partially succeeded in restoring the prestige of the monarchy. However, its criticism from the Republican camp does not subside. The parliamentary coalition Unidas Podemos, supported by the nationalist and separatist parties of Catalonia and the Basque Country, by its statements and actions, in fact, calls into question the necessity and expediency of the monarchy institution for the country [8].

One more destabilizing factor is another conflict, typical of Spain – between zealous Catholics and secularists. The Church recognized Spain's transition to democracy. According to the constitution, Catholicism lost its status as the state religion. The separation of church and state and freedom of conscience were recognized, and the "non-confessional" nature of the state was proclaimed. In traditionally Catholic Spain, the process of secularization is underway. Nevertheless,

the majority of Spaniards consider themselves Catholics. This is a decisive argument used by the Church both to justify its claims to a privileged status and to express its disagreement with certain actions of the authorities. The declarations of the church's political neutrality made by the highest church hierarchs do not mean that the church is indifferent. The clergy inspires Spaniards with the need to adhere to traditional norms of behavior and to be guided by criteria consistent with the requirements of the Christian faith when voting [9, p. 313].

The issues of marriage, the family, and education from time to time became the subject of debate between Catholic and secular forces. Their relationships became particularly tense under the PSOE governments led by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004–2011), which allowed same-sex marriages, simplified divorce procedures, and removed Catholicism from the compulsory school curriculum. Protagonists of Catholic commandments held mass rallies of thousands protesting against these measures.

VULNERABILITIES OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

Spain's political system displayed some negative trends. This is largely due to the growing crisis of confidence in the main institutions, especially the parties. The number of citizens who do not sympathize with any party has increased from 40% in 2000 to 48% in 2021. In other words, almost half of Spaniards do not sympathize with any party, although many of them vote [10, pp. 140-141]. Parties are the most important actors; in fact, they control the entire political space. The party that wins the elections appoints its candidates to the main state institutions, which, according to the classical norms of democracy, should be independent. During the transition period, politicians, aiming to ensure the manageability of the young democracy, gave virtually unlimited power to the party leadership. Parties are personalist (caudillist) in nature. The huge power of party leaders, the absence of an independent audit of financial activity, and the co-optation of candidates instead of their election to leadership positions are accompanied by widespread corruption, which has become an integral part of party development. The political scientist Juan José García Escribano calls

the Spanish democracy “the democracy of parties, which are becoming increasingly centralized and bureaucratized, putting an end to all opposition and turning into instruments that form an atmosphere of agreement around the leader and the program of the ruling group” [11, p. 68].

The transition from bipartism (the dominance of PSOE and PP in political life) to a real multiparty system (the radical right-wing *Vox*, tending toward left-wing radicalism *Podemos*, and the center-right *Ciudadanos* became powerful on a national scale) during and after the global crisis increased the electorate’s options but also impaired the relative stability of society. The multiparty system fragmented the electorate, promoting its volatility. The strengthening of *Podemos* and *Vox*, focused on fundamentally different models of development, increased political risks. The crisis of the consensus, which developed during the years of transition, aggravated. A sign of this crisis is the polarization of society into left and right, which manifests itself in aggressive party discourse and harsh mutual attacks. The polarization often becomes false: the opposing sides exaggerate the existing differences, replicate stereotyped perceptions of their antagonists, and often demonize them. This confrontation is expressed more in rhetoric than in practical actions.

The complexity and urgency of the problems facing the country require compromises and agreements among party leaders. Nevertheless, the culture of compromise has not taken root; therefore, compromises are perceived as a sign of weakness. Ambition and electoral calculations prevail over the national interest. The first coalition government in democratic Spain was set up only in January 2020.

The caudillist practices established in the parties and the lack of transparency in their leaders’ actions determine the undemocratic nature of the electoral system, which has become an object of criticism by experts and ordinary citizens. Features of anti-democracy are also inherent in the electoral system. Since 1977, the so-called system of closed lists has been used in elections of different levels. The order of names in the candidate list is determined by the party apparatus, and one can only vote for the entire list. Voters have no contact with a politician to whom they can address their requests.

The system of closed electoral lists alienates people from politics and impairs the quality of the deputy corps. At the same time, the principle of real separation of powers is emasculated, since the parliament and the government consist of deputies who were elected on a closed-list basis, and are subordinated to the party leaders [3, pp. 72-73]. The Spanish lawyer Gaspar Ariño Ortiz calls the modern electoral system “flawed, turning deputies into puppets in the hands of parties” [12, p. 37].

The specifics of the Spanish version of the electoral system, which often creates a very noticeable disproportion between the votes gained and the mandates received, is also a source of dissatisfaction for a large part of the electorate. This system is based on the well-known D’Hondt method, according to which the representation of parties is roughly proportional to the votes cast for them. At the same time, the rounding used in this method gives an advantage to larger parties, while the parties that receive fewer votes are underrepresented.

One example of disproportion is the over-representation of relatively sparsely populated provinces, usually rural provinces, whose voters give preference to right-wing parties. Thus, in the Soria province, two deputies are nominated, and in order to obtain a single mandate, 35.6 thousand votes must be gained. By contrast, in the Seville province, represented by 12 deputies, the “price” of one mandate is 128.3 thousand votes [13, p. 424].

Another disproportion is the under-representation in parliament of medium and small national parties, which suffer heavy losses. The “victim” of this situation has constantly been the Communist Party of Spain and, since 1986, the United Left (*Izquierda Unida*) coalition, of which it is a member. On the contrary, the legislation favors regional parties that win in certain electoral constituencies. For example, in the 2000 parliamentary elections, the United Left won 1,263,000 votes and 8 seats in the Congress of Deputies, while the Catalan center-right party Convergence and Union received 970,000 votes and 15 mandates, that is, about 300,000 fewer votes and 7 more mandates [14, p. 50]. “The degree of proportionality in the Spanish electoral system is one of the lowest compared to other European countries with proportional voting systems. The priority is

given not to proportional political representation, but to the stability of governance, which the parties are to ensure”, the Spanish authors note [13, p. 409, 424].

The situation is also challenging with the functioning of the judicial branch of power. Its independence, declared by the Constitution, is often not respected in practice, and there is a widespread public perception that judges are biased. The General Council of the Judiciary, the supreme body of justice, was originally elected by the judges themselves. However, after the legislation was changed in 1985, it began to be elected by deputies, i. e. members of parties, which resulted in the politicization of this judicial body. The presence in it of representatives of various competing parties complicates its work.

Other problems are the shortage of judicial personnel (there are fewer judges in Spain than in many European countries) and insufficient funding. The judicial process is slow; many cases accumulate, which remain unresolved for a long time. The prestige of the judiciary is low; there is an opinion that going to court is a waste of time and money [3, p. 73].

INCOMPLETENESS OF THE NATION-STATE

An essential problem inherited from the past and exacerbated in the period of democracy is the incompleteness of the Spanish state and lack of national consolidation. The 1978 Constitution was the result of a compromise between the right, brought up on Francoist ideas of a unitary state, and the left, seeking to transform Spain in a federative vein. The constitution defines the political-territorial model of the country, the so-called state of autonomies, only in general terms; there is no complete scheme of separation of powers between the center, the autonomies, and the municipalities. The legal framework combines the rigidity of wording with the vagueness and ambiguity of some articles, which allows various political forces to treat them in their own way.

The idea of federalization, advocated in particular by PSOE, has its supporters. However, some experts are skeptical about this idea, since the elements of federalism are already inherent in the state of autonomies. They consider the proposal

to switch to the federal model to be more rhetorical than real: the changes will not be substantial [15, p. 171].

However, it should be stressed that in Spanish political culture, there is a tradition of the centralist organization of the state. The idea of turning the state into a real federation is not close to many, especially in the context of the growth of separatism in some autonomies during the years of democracy. In the historical memory of the population, federalism is associated with separatism and the threat of the disintegration of the country¹. According to the political scientist Ramon Maiz, “Spain is, in essence, the only country in the world in which federation does not mean the creation of a union based on federative principles, but rather ‘balkanization’ and ‘disintegration’ of the state” [16]. It is noteworthy that the Spanish Constitution prohibits the creation of a federation (Article 145).

The opposition to federalization in the country is open and determined. In 2011–2018, the People’s Party’s governments set a course for the re-centralization of the political-territorial model, limiting the powers of the autonomies. The PP substantiates its position with the need to reduce the managerial staff and eliminate duplicate structures in the center and in the regions [17, pp. 64-69]. The right-wing Vox party, the third most influential party in the Cortes, goes even further, requiring the abolition of the state of autonomies and the transformation of Spain into a unitary state.

In the course of the debate and the collision of opposing views, the issue of transforming Spain into a “nation of nations” is raised (according to the Constitution, there is only one nation – Spaniards, and all the others – Catalans, Basques, etc. – are nationalities). The issue of transforming the Senate into a full-fledged chamber of territorial representation also remains unresolved: currently, it is subordinate to the lower house of the parliament, although, under the Constitution, both chambers have equal rights.

The state’s incompleteness is clearly evident in its failure to truly integrate the most developed regions – Catalonia and the Basque Country, which

¹ The Spaniards identify federalism with the First (1873–1874) and Second (1931–1939) Republics, which are perceived as periods of unrest and upheaval.

have a complex history of relationships with Madrid. The Catalan crisis was the most acute of those experienced by the Spanish democracy. One of its root causes was the constitutional deadlock. The constitution does not allow autonomies to hold a referendum without the consent of the authorities and a permissive national referendum. The camps of separatists and unionists, insisting each on their own, have shown a complete inability to negotiate. The governments of the People's Party acted only through prohibition, putting the solution to the problem, which is political in its essence, in the hands of the judiciary, which from the start put the fighters for independence in the position of the accused.

Pedro Sánchez's government took a different position. In August 2021, it began a dialogue with the Generalitat (the government of the autonomy), in which the leading position belongs to the Republican Left of Catalonia (*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, ERC*). Negotiations are held on a non-continuous basis and are expected to be difficult and long because of the parties' opposing positions with regard to the most important issue – the possibility of Madrid granting Catalonia the right to secede. ERC, with its undoubted pragmatism, advocates secession and holding a referendum as a means of achieving this goal. For Sanchez's government, both these demands are inadmissible. It seems that the parties' positions could be brought closer together by recognizing the special character of Catalonia and further increasing its powers in different areas, of course without detriment to the territorial integrity of Spain.

A large part of the Spanish public, including many socialists, considers negotiations with the Generalitat “a betrayal of national interests”. Catalan society, in which separatists coexist with unionists, is also deeply divided in relation to the independence issue. Overall, the Catalan problem is a built-in destabilizing factor, making it necessary for Spain's political elite to reconsider obsolete approaches to the country's territorial organization.

The “Basque problem” is also a potential factor destabilizing the situation in Spain. After the voluntary dissolution of the left-wing terrorist organization ETA in 2018, which from 1968 to 2011 waged an armed struggle for the separation

of the Basque Country from Spain, the situation in this troubled autonomy has become noticeably less tense. However, ETA's civilian backbone remained, the “Basque patriotic left”, who are influential in the autonomy². Radical nationalists regularly hold demonstrations in the region, where they advance their demands to the central government. According to the poll, carried out in October 2022 at the request of the autonomy's government, 24% of the respondents said they supported the independence of the region (40% were against it). Another 31% said that they “depended on circumstances” in solving this issue [18].

Currently, the leadership of the autonomy takes a pragmatic, compromise position, cooperating on a number of issues with the Spanish government. Nevertheless, it is clear that for a considerable part of the regional public, “Basque nation”, “self-government”, and “referendum on independence” are not mere words. The “Basque problem” remains unresolved. It persists in the form of a deep political conflict that continues to disunite the regional society and is able, at a certain turn of events, to seriously complicate the region's relations with Madrid.

VOLATILITY OF SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Socioeconomic factors make a weighty contribution to Spain's stable instability. In spite of the serious successes in development in the two decades before the global crisis (Spain is the fourth-largest economy in the Eurozone), its economy is characterized by structural weaknesses. These include the following: hyperdependence on the tourism industry; a low share of innovation-rich manufacturing sectors; a very high share of micro- and macro-enterprises, which are not inclined to introduce advanced technologies and are poorly represented in foreign markets; investment and foreign trade dependence on the European Union member states [19, p. 68].

Another weak link in the Spanish model of socioeconomic development should be considered

² ETA was the informal leader of the Basque National Liberation Movement, a semi-legal network structure that included a number of public and trade union organizations and groups, as well as media and local radio stations, centers for teaching the Basque language.

separately – the employment sector, characterized by persistent mass unemployment. Since the early 1980s, its level has been one of the highest in the EU, never falling below 8% of the active population and often exceeding 20%. Unemployment has become a structural feature, the Achilles' heel of the economy. Over several decades, various factors contributed to the high unemployment rate: the labor activity of women, whose influx to the labor market became large-scale under the conditions of the ongoing sociopolitical modernization³; a gap between the supply of labor force and demand for it, related to the mismatch between the education system and the labor market; the technological transformation of the economy, accompanied by the closure of unprofitable enterprises and large-scale layoffs; an influx of immigrants to the labor market, in some industries limiting the employment opportunities for indigenous inhabitants [4, p. 181].

Young people (aged 16 to 24) suffered the most from unemployment. In 2013, unemployment in this social group was 889 thousand, or 55.1% (in the EU, the statistical average was 23.3%, i. e. more than half as much) [20, p. 653]. In Spain, the theme of the lost generation, deprived of life prospects and feeling abandoned by the state, became relevant. Between 2006 and 2017, 457 thousand people migrated abroad, a significant proportion of whom were young people. It should be noted that this was the generation of young people having the highest level of education in Spanish history [21, pp. 104-105]. “The emigration of young Spaniards is dictated not by necessity, but by the collapse of hopes. It shows the disorientation of a society that does not offer a perspective, does not say what is expected of young people” [source 2, p. 112].

In the post-crisis period, youth unemployment declined, but remained very high: in 2017, it was 37.8% (vs. 16.8% for older age groups). Young people suffered more than other social groups from the consequences of the pandemic: 4 out of every 10 young people (40.1%) lost their jobs [22].

³ Women were traditionally discriminated against in Spanish society. Machismo, a peculiar psychology justifying male authority and asserting the masculine principle in an exaggerated form, was widespread. Largely under the influence of the Catholic Church, a formula was established in the social conscience: “A woman is created for the home and family, a man for work”.

The instability of the situation prevents young people from making plans for the future. Due to the absence of stable sources of income, they cannot do without the help of their parents: take a housing loan, start their own family, and have a child, which influences the demographic situation, aggravating the problem of “aging of the nation”. In 2018, 82% of young Spaniards between the ages of 16 and 29 lived with their parents (in the EU – 69%) [source 3].

An inseparable companion of unemployment is underemployment (temporary and part-time employment). In 2018, the share of temporary contracts in the total number of contracts remained high – 25%, more than twice as high as the EU average of 11% [source 2, p. 156]. Entrepreneurs benefit from this form of employment since it makes it possible to save on wages and social benefits. Unemployment and non-typical forms of employment are closely interrelated. A worker with unstable employment becomes unemployed more often. If an unemployed person gets a job, it is usually unstable employment.

Non-typical employment forms promote the growth of a wide stratum of precariat (from the word *precario* – unreliable, unstable), whose distinctive feature is the absence of stable social protection. The relationships of the precariat with the state and business are reduced to a minimum. Members of the precariat do not possess the sense of collectivism typical of industrial workers; they are primarily concerned with their own survival. Their inherent features are a crisis of professional identity, loss of self-esteem, and depression. They often treat existing political institutions with deep distrust.

Precarization exerts a profound impact on different spheres of social life, from intra-family relations to political ones. Generally speaking, it is expedient to consider precarity in two dimensions – as a person's place in the system of labor relations and as a sociocultural state of society. The feeling of unreliability of existence and fear of the future became typical for various strata of the population. Carriers of this type of consciousness are not only members of the precariat but also representatives of other social groups [4, p. 187]. “We feel insecure because we live in a dysfunctional society”, say Spanish experts [source 2, p. 197]. There is a growing process of atomization in soci-

ety: established social ties are torn apart and individualism becomes stronger.

It is impossible not to mention the shadow economy, in which millions of Spaniards are employed. According to various estimates, it generates from 18 to 25% of Spain's GDP (the EU average is 14.3–18.4%) [20, p. 666].

Since the global crisis, social polarization has been growing in Spain. Its level is one of the highest in the EU: the income of the wealthiest 20% of people is six times higher than that of the poorest 20%. It is essentially a dualistic society, moving at two different speeds. Since social elevators are blocked, professional and career mobility has become downward. Poverty has become a chronic, "hereditary" phenomenon [10, pp. 155-157].

Additional tension in society is generated by the situation in health care and education. The health care situation is characterized by insufficient funding and a lack of medical staff and equipment. It is no coincidence that in the first months of the pandemic, Spain became one of the world leaders in the number of cases and deaths.

The education system is also far from meeting the demands of the time. One of the reasons for this, along with insufficient funding, is the inconsistency of state policy in this sphere. In just a quarter of a century, beginning with the Constitution of 1978, eight basic laws on education were adopted. Once in power, one or another party corrects or even revises the laws adopted by its political opponent. Education has become a scene of constant struggle for votes; the debates on this issue are fierce and violent [23, pp. 265-270].

Another factor of destabilization is immigration. The presence of large groups of immigrants from underdeveloped countries is accompanied by the strengthening of nationalist and xenophobic sentiments among the indigenous population. At the same time, many migrants are unwilling to adapt to Spanish realities and prefer to live in isolation.

The existence of numerous destabilizing factors promotes the growth of protests. They are initiated both by parties and trade unions and by new types of social movements formed by social networks [24, pp. 73-82].

CONCLUSION

Instability has turned into a norm of life in Spanish society. In this relatively young democracy, new challenges are superimposed on the old unresolved problems, making instability more pronounced than in more developed EU states. At the same time, numerous factors of instability do not manifest themselves simultaneously. Some of them are constantly active, while others stay in a "dormant state", "waking up" and provoking conflict situations at certain turns of the political and economic environment. It should also be kept in mind that the public reacts differently to different manifestations of destabilization. One part of society treats them negatively, aiming to correct the existing state of affairs, while the other part adapts to them, either taking them for granted or simply ignoring them.

In any event, minimizing the risks associated with destabilizing factors seems essential to the current and future development of Spanish society.

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