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affecting the Socialist Party (PSOE) and on the Ceuta crisis after the influx in late July of 70,000 people from Morocco. The risk for PP leader Alberto Núñez Feijóo, who aspires to succeed Pedro Sánchez at La Moncloa, the seat of government, is that in his eagerness to broaden his base to the right, he may radicalize his positions so much that he scares off moderate voters.

The PSOE and the left are reaching the end of the term with the polls against them, but in the protests after Maricarmen Abascal's eviction, they have found a lever to mobilize the grassroots. After months consumed by legal cases, they can now return the debate to the realm of social policies: those aimed at addressing citizens' everyday needs, such as housing, education and healthcare, areas in which the socialists have driven decisive changes during decades of democracy.

Faced with profound public discontent over housing, the government has at least made a belated effort to begin seeking answers. The political right — the national parties as well as the Catalan regional party Junts — frustrated it. Social democracy now has an opportunity to demonstrate that its solutions are still valid, and to assert its legacy of social progress, as well as the pacification of Catalonia after the unilateral secession bid, and Spain's role in a world



where multilateralism and international law are under assault.

There is a danger that no one, progressive or conservative, should underestimate: the possibility that, for the first time since the death of the dictator Francisco Franco and the consolidation of democracy, a far-right formation could govern in Spain. Today, that possibility is real. Vox ap-

pears to be the partner the PP would favor if it wins without an absolute majority, but it is not a party like the others. The xenophobic rhetoric of its leaders, its proximity to global racist movements and parts of its program that contradict the Constitution place it in positions more radical even than leaders such as Giorgia Meloni of Italy or Marine Le Pen of France. The election

will give voters a chance to scrutinize every platform, including those that could have a destructive impact on a diverse and pluralistic society. Nothing has been decided yet. The prospect of a government with Vox ministers and policies cannot be trivialized, nor should the major parties resign themselves to that outcome. The Spanish elections will also be decisive on this cru-



Santiago Abascal, leader and presidential candidate of Spain's far-right party Vox, gestures as he speaks during a rally.
● JUAN MEDINA/REUTERS

cial question for Spain and for its position in Europe and the world. It is time for the voters to have their say.

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Spain's snap election Why Sánchez called it, what comes next



By Javier Carbonell
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OPINION

Spain is something of a political paradox. Its economy has been growing faster than most other major European economies, while Pedro Sánchez's governments can point to a substantial progressive record, from the green transition and expanded social policies to development aid and the regularisation of migrants. Many of these measures have been fiercely criticised by the right. Yet, in the end, it was an issue on which the left should theoretically have had the political advantage — housing — that pushed Sánchez to call an early election.

Spain is experiencing one of Europe's most acute housing affordability crises. The issue exploded politically after the eviction of Maricarmen Abascal, an 87-year-old woman who had lived in her Madrid home for seven decades. Her eviction triggered large demonstrations and renewed mobilisation around housing across the country.

The government responded with two emergency housing decrees containing stronger protections for tenants and measures intended to regulate the rental market. Their defeat in Congress, however, exposed the weakness that has haunted



Sánchez's government since the 2023 election: it does not have a reliable parliamentary majority. Junts, the Catalan pro-independence party on the centre-right, joined the PP and Vox in voting down the measures. Sánchez has now turned that parliamentary defeat into an electoral confrontation, calling a general election for November 29. His argument is clear: if the government cannot secure enough votes in parliament to tackle the housing crisis, voters

should give it a stronger mandate.

The starting point is difficult for the left. Recent polling puts the PP ahead of the PSOE and shows Vox as particularly strong. A future PP-Vox government is, therefore, one of the central possibilities shaping the campaign, although its composition would depend on the result and subsequent negotiations. Sánchez, however, has been here before. In 2023, the PP

also led the polls, yet Sánchez mobilised enough support for the PSOE and later assembled a parliamentary majority that allowed him to remain prime minister.

The biggest uncertainty may lie to the left of the PSOE. The space once occupied by Podemos is fragmented, with several parties preparing to contest the election through a new Frente Amplio platform, while Podemos remains outside it. Whether the left can reorganise quickly



Maricarmen Abascal, 87, is being evicted on a stretcher from her apartment in Madrid, Spain, on September 23, 2026.
● GETTY IMAGES

enough may prove decisive. Sánchez is a master at turning difficult situations on their head. He faces difficult odds, yes — but so will his adversaries when they face him.

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