

Internal Assessment  
History HL

**To what extent was Spain diplomatically isolated under Franco's regime between 1939 and 1946?**

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Word count: 2,192

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## Section 1: Identification and evaluation of the sources

Francisco Franco ruled Spain under a dictatorship between 1939 and 1975. Overall, most historians agree that Franco's foreign policy changed over time, as well as international perception of his regime. Therefore, this investigation will focus on the question: "To what extent was Spain diplomatically isolated between 1945 and 1946?".

The *United Nations General Assembly Resolution 39 (I) about Relations of Members of United Nations with Spain (1946)* is relevant to this investigation as it provides insight of the view of the United Nations towards Franco's Spain by 1946, califying it as fascist and refusing the acceptance of Spain into the UN. The origin is valuable as the resolution was adopted by the United Nations and elaborated by experts in international relations. However, a limitation in the origin can also be found, as after the Second World War the victorious powers began to influence the rest of the world, and therefore this resolution may be an act of condemnation of Franco's regime because Franco had counted with the support of the Nazi Germany and the Fascist Italy during the Spanish Civil War.

The purpose of the source is to refuse Spain's entrance into the United Nations, qualifying Franco's regime as fascist. It is valuable because it clearly reveals the attitude from the United Nations towards Franco's regime, based in diplomatic isolation. However, a limitation of the purpose is that the condemnation of the regime may have been relaxed over time, as, for example, Spain entered the United Nations in 1955, still under Franco.

The content of the source is valuable as it gives detailed information about, apart from the position of the UN towards Franco's regime, the reasons why Franco's Spain, at least until 1946, was a fascist state and could not join the United Nations. In juxtaposition, a limitation of the content is that it may not correspond to the real policy taken by the UN. In 1953, Spain was allowed to join UNESCO, an agency which was part of the UN, and lately to the UN as such in 1955.

The book *Dinámica de la Sociedad Internacional*, written by Rafael Calduch, is relevant to the investigation as it provides details and information about international relations of Franco's regime. The origin of this source is Rafael Calduch, who obtained a PhD

in Commercial, Political and Economic Sciences and serves as professor of international relations and international law and served as history professor at the Complutense University of Madrid. A value of this origin is that the author is specialised in diplomacy and international relations,, and therefore the information stated in the book has a high rate of reliability. However, he also was a member of the Spanish Congress when he was elected national deputy in 2015, which means that the origin of the source contains a limitation as the author may be influenced by his ideology and political opinion.

The purpose of this source is to go through the bases of diplomacy and international relations, including a deep chapter in which the international relations of Franco's regime are described in the content. A value of the purpose and the content is that, due to distance from events under Franco's regime, the study of the period can be more objectively written and referenced.

Section 1 wordcount: 542

## Section 2: Investigation

As many historians point out, Spain's diplomacy prior, during and just after the Second World War was quite limited, meaning therefore that Spain was diplomatically isolated during this year. However, other historians such as Rafael Calduch argue that, during the Second World War, Franco's foreign policy between 1939 and 1946 of "Conditional acceptance of the regime" due to its relationships with the Axis Powers, but also with the Allies specially from 1943 onwards.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, from 1946, this own historian argues that Spain was diplomatically isolated.

Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, Spain had joined the Anti-Comintern Pact in March 1939, strengthening its ideological relation with Italy, Germany and Japan. When the war broke out in September 1939, Franco's government passed the Decree of Neutrality, announcing it through their basement in Burgos:

"Officially stated the state of war (...) I hereby order, the strictest neutrality to the Spanish subjects with regarding to the current laws and the principles of International Law"<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the debate that this neutrality meant a rupture in the economic and commercial relations between Spain, Italy and Germany, Rafael Calduch argues that nowise.<sup>3</sup> Despite the fact that Spain did not directly send military aid, the Nazis took advantage of the Wolfram produced in Galicia to strengthen their armament. Better known as the "Wolfram fibre"<sup>4</sup>, the Nazis' need of raw materials enriched small Galician villages. However, according to the journalist P. Cons, as soon as the money arrived, it went off.<sup>5</sup> She also points out what is known as the "Unknown Battle", in which Spain was closed to suffer an intervention from the Allies, promoted by the US. However, Winston Churchill withdrew from that idea and it did not take place.

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<sup>1</sup> Gaucci, G; 2015; *History Paper 2: Causes and Effects of 20th century wars, the Spanish Civil War*; 1st edition; pp. 61

<sup>2</sup> Decree published in the "Boletín Oficial del Estado" (BOE) on 5 September 1939; <https://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE/1939/248/A04937-04937.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Calduch, R.; 1993; *Dinámica de la Sociedad Internacional*; Chapter 2; pp. 8

<sup>4</sup> Conde, J; 2017; La fiebre de wolframio; *ElDiario.es*; [https://www.eldiario.es/extremadura/sociedad/fiebre-wolframio-extremadura-guerras-mundiales\\_1\\_3657297.html](https://www.eldiario.es/extremadura/sociedad/fiebre-wolframio-extremadura-guerras-mundiales_1_3657297.html)

<sup>5</sup> Declarations given by Paula Cons to the director of the newspaper *El Español* in October 2017; [https://www.elespanol.com/cultura/cine/20171027/257474528\\_0.html](https://www.elespanol.com/cultura/cine/20171027/257474528_0.html)

However, as historian M. Florentín suggest, Franco did not support the Nazi Germany at all. Nevertheless, even this historian argues that, when Franco changed the position of “neutrality” to the position of “non belligerence”, Spain aligned itself with the Third Reich, but without entering directly into the war.<sup>6</sup> This position of limited cooperation can be seen after the “Hendaya Interview”, which took place on 23 October 1940 between Hitler and Franco. Actually, the purpose of the interview was to agree to the conditions for Spain’s entrance into the war, but after seven hours of meeting, a major agreement was not reached. Instead, several ties were made between both countries. The Hendaya Protocol was signed, by which Spain will join the Pact of Steel, it will declare war on the United Kingdom in a future, and will obtain, in compensation, territories such as Gibraltar and other territories in Africa.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, the most important agreement reached in Hendaya was the creation of the Blue Division, a group of Spanish volunteers that were sent to fight against the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1944. In total, there were more than 50,000 Spanish volunteers.<sup>8</sup> The shipping of these volunteers came after the declaration of “Non-Belligerency”, which substituted the “Neutrality” with reference to Spain’s role in the Second World War. Back to the point, the historian Juan Pablo Fusi has affirmed that the Blue Division had a significant impact, but it was not decisive as other factors. He describes this group of volunteers as “a diplomatic maneuver that had a positive effect on Spain by proclaiming that it is neutral in the war in the West and belligerent against communism”.<sup>9</sup> Another point in which Spain supported Germany, was in allowing German submarines to refuel in Spanish ports. In addition, Franco’s propaganda censored the defeats of the Germans, German Abwehr agents had great freedom to work in Spanish territory while the British were highly guarded. Therefore, it can be assumed that diplomacy was highly practised during the first stages of the Second World War.

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<sup>6</sup> Florentín, M; 2020; ¿Por qué no se alineó la España de Franco con Hitler?; *La Vanguardia*; <https://www.lavanguardia.com/historiayvida/historia-contemporanea/20200325/4845823728/franco-hitler-hendaya-ijgm-von-ribbentrop-serrano-suner.html>

<sup>7</sup> Lara, J.M.; 2011; El protocolo secreto de Hendaya; *hmcontemporaneo*; <https://hmcontemporaneo.wordpress.com/2011/08/17/el-protocolo-secreto-de-hendaya-1940/>

<sup>8</sup> Rojas, A; 2019; División Azul: todos los secretos de los españoles que lucharon por Hitler; *El Mundo*; <https://www.elmundo.es/papel/historias/2019/05/23/5ce57733fc6c8349698b45c7.html>

<sup>9</sup> Declarations given by Juan Pablo Fusi in the radio “COPE” in September 2019; [https://www.cope.es/programas/la-tarde/noticias/importancia-del-papel-espana-divison-azul-segunda-guerra-mundial-20190903\\_490167](https://www.cope.es/programas/la-tarde/noticias/importancia-del-papel-espana-divison-azul-segunda-guerra-mundial-20190903_490167)

Overall, according to the historian Florentino Rodao, Franco's idea was based on the fact that there were three wars occurring at the same time: the Axis powers against the USSR, in which Spain was in favour of the Axis; the Axis against the Allies, in which Spain was neutral; and the war in the Pacific, in which Spain supported the US to defeat the Japanese, which were, according to Franco, barbarians.<sup>10</sup> This was known as the "Policy of the Three Fronts". It had already been stated the ways in which Franco helped the Axis, specifically Germany, but Spain's position changed radically in 1942. When the Torch Operation took place, where British and American troops landed in North Africa, Franco's imperial dreams due to the risk of invasion for his alignment with the Axis were over.<sup>11</sup> As Stanley Payne points out, the war sign started to invert.<sup>12</sup> Spain started to make ties with other countries by the end of 1942, such as the Lisbon Protocol, by which Spain and Portugal strengthened their relationship. Portugal did support the British in the Second World War, confirming the fact of Spain's neutrality.<sup>13</sup>

Between 5 and 13 July 1943, the Battle of Kursk took place, in which the Blue Division could not stop the advance of the Russian Front. On 3 October 1943, two months after Mussolini resigned, Spain abandoned the "non-belligerency" and returned to neutrality. The Blue Division was retired on 12 October leaving over 3,900 deaths. From now on, as the Allies were advancing in defeating the Axis, pressures on Franco's regime increased, and cooperation with Germany began to end. The US demanded Spain to stop trading wolfram with Germany. As Franco did not accept the proposal, the US suspended the trading of petrol in January 1944. On the other hand, the British practised more flexibility with Franco's regime. In fact, Churchill declared:

"I am satisfied that agreements are being reached with Spain. (...) Finally, an agreement has been made over wolfram, as Spain will reduce its exportation to Germany during the following months"<sup>14</sup>

The position of Churchill was based on acceptance of Franco's regime, while US President Roosevelt declared "that there would be no place in the United Nations for a government founded over fascist principles".<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Rodao, F; 2002; *Franco y el imperio japonés. Imágenes y propaganda en tiempos de guerra*

<sup>11</sup> Moradiellos, E; 2000; *La España de Franco*; pp. 67

<sup>12</sup> Payne, S; 1997; *El primer franquismo. Los años de la autarquía en Madrid*; pp. 33

<sup>13</sup> Mohorte, A.; *La presencia española en la Segunda Guerra Mundial*; published by Liber Museum; <https://www.museoliber.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/La-presencia-española-en-la-Segunda-Guerra-Mundial.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Speech made by Winston Churchill on 24 May 1944, at the House of Commons

<sup>15</sup> Calduch, R; 1993; *Dinámica de la Sociedad Internacional*; Chapter 2; pp. 16

Germany officially surrendered on 8 May 1945, ending the Second World War in Europe. In response to this, Franco introduced the “Fuero de los Españoles” on 13 July 1945<sup>16</sup>, trying to dissociate his regime from fascism. On 22 October, the Law of Referendum was also introduced. However, none of these measures were able to eliminate the past collaboration with the Axis Powers. <sup>17</sup> In fact, several months after the set up of the United Nations, the Resolution 39 (J) was emitted in 1946 to refuse Spain’s entrance into the organisation due to:

"(a) (...) Franco’s regime is a fascist regime patterned on, and established as a result of aid received from, Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy."

"(b) During the long struggle of the United Nations against Hitler and Mussolini, Franco, despite continued Allied protests, gave very substantial aid to the enemy Powers. (...)"

"(c) Incontrovertible documentary evidence establishes that Franco was a guilty party with Hitler and Mussolini in the conspiracy to wage war against those countries. (...)"<sup>18</sup>

By the end of 1946, only Argentina, Portugal, Dominican Republic and the Vatican City had ambassadors in Madrid. Regarding support to Franco’s regime, there is the case of Argentina under Perón, which signed a treaty with Spain allowing a credit of 350 million pesos to import food. This credit allowed Spain to import 400,000 tms of wheat, 12,000 tms of corn, 25,000 tms of meat, among others. <sup>19</sup>

In conclusion, it can be affirmed that Spain was never completely isolated from 1939 to 1946. Prior and during the war, Spain made several ties with the Nazi Germany. Although the last stages of the Second World War and after the UN Resolution Spain had limited contact with foreign countries, the reality was that it made commercial ties with countries such as Argentina, meaning that it was not complete alone in the international spectrum.

Section 2 wordcount: 1,306

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE/1945/199/A00358-00360.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Calduch, R; 1993; *Dinámica de la Sociedad Internacional*; Chapter 2; pp. 16

<sup>18</sup> Resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the UN in 1946;  
[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/United\\_Nations\\_General\\_Assembly\\_Resolution\\_39](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/United_Nations_General_Assembly_Resolution_39)

<sup>19</sup>

[http://valenpedia.lasprovincias.es/historia-valencia/1946/argentina\\_concede\\_a\\_espana\\_un\\_credito\\_para\\_importar\\_trigo\\_0?ref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com](http://valenpedia.lasprovincias.es/historia-valencia/1946/argentina_concede_a_espana_un_credito_para_importar_trigo_0?ref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com)



### Section 3: Reflection

This investigation has made me more aware about the methods used by historians, as I've also used them. During this investigation, I focused on appropriate research of relevant information, such as the sources selected for the first section. Accompanied by the own research of sources, the evaluation and discussion and the comparison of them is also a very important issue. For example, in Section 1, I had to analyse the sources and evaluate their values and limitations. Also, throughout this investigation, I had to interpret primary sources, such as the Decree of Neutrality or the UN Resolution. In addition, as everything related to Franco's regime is a rather controversial issue in Spain, I had to deal with different perspectives to reach a consistent conclusion. Examples include historians with different ideologies such as R. Calduch and S. Payne.

I was also able to reflect about the challenges historians usually face. At the beginning, the research had some difficulty due to the fact that there is plenty of information about Franco's regime, but not so detailed about its foreign policy. Another challenge they face is to work with both primary and secondary sources, in which limitations can be found. In primary sources, such as Churchill's speech, there is the limitation of the influence Churchill had and that, by that moment, the information about Franco's regime is not the same as the one available nowadays. On the other hand, in secondary sources such as the articles that were selected, the main limitation is the possibility of ideological influence on them.

Finally, I became also aware about the limitations of the role of a historian. Historians can distort history in terms that, as I noticed in some of the sources selected, they can select only a piece of information without taking into account the rest. For example, in the article "Why did Franco not help Hitler?", only the title can be selected as evidence supporting the opinion that Spain did not help Germany. However, it is the own article where Franco's actions in benefit of Germany are described.<sup>20</sup>

Section 3 wordcount: 344

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<sup>20</sup> Florentín, M; 2020; ¿Por qué no se alineó la España de Franco con Hitler?; *La Vanguardia*; <https://www.lavanguardia.com/historiayvida/historia-contemporanea/20200325/4845823728/franco-hitler-henda-ya-ijgm-von-ribbentrop-serrano-suner.html>

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