



José María Aznar

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José María Aznar was born in Madrid in 1953. He studied a Degree in Law at the Complutense University and has held the qualification of Inspector of State Finances since 1975.

He is the President of FAES (Foundation for Social Studies and Analysis). He is also a Distinguished Scholar at Georgetown University, where, starting in Autumn 2004, he will teach various seminars on contemporary European politics at the Edmund A. Walsh School. He is the Chairman of the Partido Popular, and of Christian Democrat and People's Parties International (CDI).

He became President of the Spanish Government (Prime Minister) in 1996, following the electoral success of the Partido Popular. Following the party's repeated success at the polls in the year 2000, this time obtaining an absolute majority, Aznar was elected again. He held the presidency up until the Elections of 2004, at which he voluntarily stood down in favor of a new candidate.

Throughout his time as President of the Government, he led a significant process of economic and social reform. Thanks to his liberalization and competition policies, budget control, rational public spending and tax cuts, almost 5 million new jobs were created in Spain. The Spanish GDP figure increased year after year at a rate of over 2%, on average 3,4%, featuring accumulated growth of 64% over eight years. Throughout this time, the country advanced from 78% to 87% of the EU average income. The public deficit was reduced from 6% of GDP until the budget was balanced in the year 2002. Furthermore, during Aznar's time as President, Spain enjoyed its first two reductions in income tax since the advent of democracy.

One of José María Aznar's main concerns is the battle against terrorism. He is in favour of a firm policy, contrary to any kind of political concession, as well as the idea of fostering close international cooperation among the democratic countries. He is a firm supporter of the close relationship with America and of the European Union's commitment to promoting greater freedom and economic reforms.

José María Aznar began his political career as member of Alianza Popular in 1979. In 1982 he was elected as a Member of Parliament for Ávila. He was later promoted to the post of Regional President of Alianza Popular in Castile and León and between 1987 and 1989 he served as Head of the Regional Government of Castile and León.

In 1989, following the re-founding of the Partido Popular, Aznar was elected as a candidate for President of the Spanish Government for the General Elections of 1989. The following year he was elected as Chairman of the party. He once again headed the list of Partido Popular candidates in 1993, 1996 and the year 2000. Throughout these four legislatures, he served as a Member of Parliament for Madrid. Between 1989 and 1996 he was the leader of the Opposition.

Aznar has written several books, including the following: *Libertad y Solidaridad (Freedom and Solidarity)* (1991), *España: la segunda transición* (1994) (*Spain: The Second Transition*), *La España en que yo creo* (1995) (*The Spain I Believe In*), *Ocho años de Gobierno* (2004) (*Eight Years of Government*) and *Retratos y Perfiles: de Fraga a Bush* (2005).

Married to Ana Botella, Aznar is the father of three children, and has one grandson.

7/05