While Spain today is a unified, single political entity, history did not always indicate that this would come to be. From pre-Roman times to the Christian *Reconquista*, the Iberian peninsula has consisted of numerous distinctive regions throughout the centuries. Even today, Spain consists of 18 distinct regions, each with its own Parliament and often its own distinct language. Today's region-specific dialects, flags, and vocabularies emphasize the distinctiveness of each area. They are clear evidence that what today is simply known as "Spain" has for many more years been a group of distinct cultural and political entities that only formed a single nation after centuries of fragmentation.

Beginning millennia ago, in 1100 BCE, when Phoenician traders first arrived on the Iberian Peninsula, the land was already home to numerous complex societies, some urban and other agrarian, each with their own languages and customs. By the third century BCE Iberia was controlled by Rome, and during his reign Augustus divided the peninsula into three distinct provinces: Baetica in the south, Lusitania in the west, and Hispania Citerior in the east.

The end of Roman authority came at the hands of not one, but multiple raiding invaders from across Europe who all held distinct areas. When the vast majority of the peninsula came to be ruled by the Visigoths, it was once again divided into separate provinces.

The peninsula would again be invaded in 711 by a mix of Arab and Berber forces from northern Africa, and by the 11th century ACE, the Muslim-ruled Al-Andalus would be separated into distinct “taifa” kingdoms, each with its own leader and politics. Meanwhile in northern Iberia, smaller Christian kingdoms spoke their own languages and implemented different laws. By the time the Christian *Reconquista* began, different Christian kingdoms claimed their own Muslim lands. Kingdoms united over time via marriages and alliances, but only in 1492 did the Christians conquer Granada, the final Muslim holding, to unite all of Spain.

Today Spain remains a united country, but evidence remains of its fragmented past. Portugal can be taken as its own example. Separated geographically from the rest of the peninsula, the region developed its own unique history during the Middle Ages and today remains a distinct country with its own language. Even in Spain today, individuals often consider themselves members of their region first, and Spanish second. The history of Spain is a long and complicated one, but has achieved political unity only relatively recently.